



# GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS

## Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions

### Co-funding of Regional, National and International Programmes (COFUND)

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Note: National Contact Points (NCPs) have been set up across Europe by the national governments to provide information and personalised support to H2020 applicants in their native language. The mission of the NCPs is to raise awareness, inform and advise on H2020 funding opportunities as well as to support potential applicants in the preparation, submission and follow-up of the grant applications. For details on the NCP in your country, please consult the website at <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/support/ncp>

Additionally, in order to find handbooks on how to prepare applications, success stories, interesting information about widening countries and much more, you may also consult the website of the EU-funded Network of MSCA NCPs Net4Mobility+ at: <https://www.net4mobilityplus.eu/>

Disclaimer: *This guide aims to facilitate potential applicants. It is provided for information purposes only and is not intended to replace consultation of any applicable legal sources. Neither the European Commission nor the Research Executive Agency (or any person acting on their behalf) can be held responsible for the use made of this guidance document. Note that the guidance provided in the Annotated Model Grant Agreement shall prevail in case of discrepancies.*

## The Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions in Horizon 2020

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions (MSCA) aim to support the career development and training of researchers – with a focus on innovation skills – in all research disciplines through international and intersectoral mobility.

The MSCA are expected to finance around 65 000 researchers between 2014 and 2020, including 25 000 doctoral candidates. The actions will address several objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, including the Innovation Union flagship initiative. The latter states that the EU will need at least one million new research jobs if it is to reach the target of spending 3% of EU GDP on research and development by 2020.

By funding excellent research and providing attractive working conditions, the MSCA offer high-quality professional opportunities open to researchers of any age, nationality or discipline.

### The 2020 Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions are:

- **Innovative Training Networks (ITN):** Innovative doctoral-level training providing a range of skills in order to maximise employability;
- **Individual Fellowships (IF):** Support for experienced researchers undertaking mobility between countries, and also to the non-academic sector;
- **Research and Innovation Staff Exchange (RISE):** International and intersectoral collaboration through the exchange of research and innovation staff;
- **Co-funding of regional, national and international programmes (COFUND):** Co-financing high-quality fellowship or doctoral programmes with transnational mobility.

The Coordination and Support action **European Researchers' Night (NIGHT)** funded under the MSCA is a Europe-wide public event to enhance researchers' public recognition, and to stimulate interest in research careers, especially among young people.

Guides for Applicants for any other MSCA can be found by following the links on the Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal at:

<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/programmes/h2020>

The MSCA website can be found at:

<http://ec.europa.eu/msca>

**This Guide is based on the rules and conditions contained in the legal documents relating to Horizon 2020 (in particular the Horizon 2020 Framework Programme and Specific Programme, the Rules for Participation, and the Work Programme), all of which can be consulted via the Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal.**

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## **Definitions used throughout this Guide**

**Early-Stage Researchers (ESR)** must at the date of recruitment or the deadline of the co-funded programme's call be in the first four years (full-time equivalent research experience) of their research careers and not yet have been awarded a doctoral degree.

**Experienced Researchers (ER)** must at the date of recruitment or the deadline of the co-funded programme's call, be in possession of a doctoral degree or have at least four years of full-time equivalent research experience.

**Full-Time Equivalent Research Experience** is measured from the date when a researcher obtained the degree entitling him or her to embark on a doctorate, either in the country in which the degree was obtained or in the country in which the researcher is recruited, even if a doctorate was never started or envisaged.

**Mobility Rule:** Researchers may not have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in the country of the beneficiary/partner organisation (or — in case of international European interest organisations — with this organisation) for more than 12 months in the 3 years immediately before the co-funded programme's call deadline or the date of recruitment unless otherwise specified in Annex 1 for existing programmes.

For Fellowship programmes supporting reintegration in Europe, career restart opportunities, or activities similar to those of the MSCA-IF Society and Enterprise Panel, researchers may not have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in the country of the beneficiary/partner organisation (or — in case of international European interest organisations — with this organisation) for more than 3 years in the 5 years immediately before the co-funded programme's call deadline or the date of recruitment, unless otherwise specified in Annex 1 for existing programmes.

Time spent as part of a procedure for obtaining refugee status under the Geneva Convention<sup>1</sup>, compulsory national service and/or short stays such as holidays are not taken into account.

**The academic sector** refers to public or private higher education establishments awarding academic degrees, public or private non-profit research organisations for whom one of the main objectives is to pursue research or technological development, and international European interest organisations as they are defined in Article 2.1(12) of the Horizon 2020 Rules for Participation Regulation (EU) No 1290/2013.

**The non-academic sector** means any socio-economic actor not included in the academic sector and fulfilling the requirements of the Horizon 2020 Rules for Participation Regulation (EU) No 1290/2013.

**International European Interest Organisation (IEIO)** means an international organisation, the majority of whose members are Member States or Associated Countries, and whose principal objective is to promote scientific and technological cooperation in Europe.

**The beneficiary** is the legal entity that signs the Grant Agreement and has the responsibility for the proper implementation of the action.

**Partner organisations** contribute to the implementation of the action, but do not sign the Grant Agreement.

**Europe:** EU Member States (**MS**), including their outermost regions, the Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT) linked to MS and Associated Countries (**AC**).

**Associated Countries (AC)** means a third country which is party to an international agreement with the Union, as identified in Article 7 of Regulation (EU) No 1291/2013.

**Non-associated Third Countries (TC)** are countries which are neither EU Member States (MS) nor associated to Horizon 2020 (AC).

**Work Programme:** Part 3 (Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions) of the Horizon 2020 Work Programme 2018-2020. European Commission Decision *C(2019)4575 of 2 July 2019*

<sup>1</sup> 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol.

## **1. General Aspects**

The specific objectives of the COFUND scheme are described in the [Work Programme](#):

*The COFUND scheme aims to stimulate regional, national or international programmes to foster excellence in researchers' training, mobility and career development, spreading the best practices of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions.*

*This will be achieved by co-funding new or existing regional, national, and international programmes to open up to, and provide for, international, inter-sectoral and interdisciplinary research training, as well as transnational and cross-sectoral mobility of researchers at all stages of their career.*

The programmes to be implemented aim to increase the impact of Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions (MSCA).

This will increase the quality of research training in Europe at all career stages, including at doctoral level, foster free circulation of researchers and knowledge in Europe, and promote attractive research careers by offering open recruitment and attractive working conditions.

COFUND aims to increase the transnational, inter-sectoral and inter-disciplinary mobility of researchers, in line with the principles set out in the **European Charter for Researchers** and the **Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers**<sup>2</sup> and with the **EU Principles for Innovative Doctoral Training**<sup>3</sup> (when appropriate).

COFUND will support **Doctoral Programmes (DPs)** and **Fellowship Programmes (FPs)** for the most promising [early-stage researchers](#) and [experienced researchers](#), respectively. The programmes must run a selection process based on openness, transparency, merit, impartiality and equitability for the researchers who are applying.

## **2. Participating organisations**

Participating organisations in COFUND are legal entities that fund or manage Doctoral Programmes or Fellowship Programmes for researchers, or that recruit, supervise, host or train researchers. Examples are research funding agencies, ministries, regional authorities, universities, research organisations, private companies or other organisations from the non-academic sector.

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<sup>2</sup> Commission Recommendation of 11 March 2005 on the European Charter for Researchers and on a Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (2005/251/EC); [https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/brochures/am509774cee\\_en\\_e4.pdf](https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/brochures/am509774cee_en_e4.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/policy\\_library/principles\\_for\\_innovative\\_doctoral\\_training.pdf](https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/policy_library/principles_for_innovative_doctoral_training.pdf)

For the purpose of COFUND, there are two different types of participating organisations:

- **Beneficiary**

The **Beneficiary is the sole signatory to the Grant Agreement**, which receives the EU funding, claims costs, and takes complete responsibility for the proper implementation of the proposed programme. **The beneficiary must be a legal entity established in an EU Member State or Horizon 2020 Associated Country that funds or manages Doctoral Programmes or Fellowship Programmes for researchers. It may also recruit, supervise, host or train the researchers, either on its own or in conjunction with partner organisations.**

For the purpose of the COFUND action **International European Interest Organisations (IEIO) are considered as legal entities established in a MS or AC**. The same rule also applies to the European Commission Joint Research Centre (JRC) or to an entity 'created under Union law' (see Article 9(2) and Article 10(1)(a) of the Horizon 2020 Rules for Participation Regulation).

- **Partner Organisations**

The **Partner Organisations** are **legal entities that contribute to the action by implementing a Doctoral or Fellowship programme (i.e. recruitment of researchers) or by providing training and hosting to researchers during secondments.** **Partner Organisations** are not signatories of the Grant Agreement. Therefore, they cannot claim costs of the programme directly from the Research Executive Agency (REA). Instead, their costs for activities in the research training programme are covered by the unit costs paid to the beneficiary.

**Partner organisations that recruit researchers in the context of a Doctoral or Fellowship programme must be established in an EU Member State, H2020 Associated Country, or Third Country listed in General Annex A<sup>4</sup> to the H2020 Work Programme. Partner organisations providing secondments can be established in any country, i.e. in any EU Member State, H2020 Associated Country, or non-associated Third Country (including those not listed in General Annex A).**

If the proposal is funded, the signature of a partnership agreement between the beneficiary and all partner organisations involved is strongly recommended. The partnership agreement must comply with the obligations laid down in the grant agreement.

**Please note: All partner organisations, known at the time of proposal submission, must:**

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<sup>4</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/wp/2018-2020/annexes/h2020-wp1820-annex-a-countries-rules\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/wp/2018-2020/annexes/h2020-wp1820-annex-a-countries-rules_en.pdf)

- 1) **provide a letter of commitment in Part B of the proposal, which explicitly states their precise role in the action and their exact and quantified financial contributions if any;**
- 2) **be included in the overview of all the identified Partner Organisations provided in [Table 2](#) in part B of the proposal.**

In case potential beneficiaries do not know the partner organisations at the time of application, these can be added during the lifetime of the project.

**If the project relies on the financial commitment of a partner organisation and no letter of commitment is provided, or if the letter provided does not explicitly address point 1 above, then evaluators will be instructed to ignore this financial contribution.**

**Commitment letters must be on headed institution stationary, be dated after the call opening, and be signed by an individual who has the authority to make the commitment on behalf of the partner organisation.**

Participating organisations ([beneficiary](#) and partner organisations) can belong to one of the following sectors: i) The [academic sector](#) (e.g. universities, public or private non-profit research organisations, International European Interest Organisations) ii) The [non-academic sector](#) (e.g. ministries, regional authorities, private companies, civil society organisations).

Before applying, the [beneficiary](#) has to register on the Funding & Tender Opportunities portal, if not yet done, for a Participant Identification Code (PIC), and is automatically classified into one of the two sectors cited above during the validation process<sup>5</sup>.

**COFUND is a mono-beneficiary action.** Only one legal entity established in an EU Member State or [Associated Country](#) will apply to the COFUND scheme through the Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal, as [beneficiary](#).

### **3. Structure and features**

Applicants must submit multi-annual proposals for new or existing Doctoral Programmes (DPs) or Fellowship Programmes (FPs) that may be run at regional, national or international level.

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<sup>5</sup> Legal entities having a valid PIC number under FP7 maintain their PIC in H2020. The details of all validated organisations are stored in a Unique Registration Facility (URF). For the confirmation and, if necessary, revision of the data stored in the URF, the Commission asks each organisation to nominate a Legal Entity Appointed Representative (LEAR). The LEARs can view their organisations' legal and financial data online and ask for corrections and changes through the Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal. Note that under H2020, it will be necessary for each participating organisation to submit proof documents regarding the nomination of the LEAR before a Grant Agreement can be signed. More information can be found on the Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal: [https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/grants/applying-for-funding/register-an-organisation\\_en.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/grants/applying-for-funding/register-an-organisation_en.htm)

COFUND programmes may take one of two forms:

- |  |
|--|
| A. Doctoral Programmes (DPs)<br>B. Fellowship Programmes (FPs) |
|--|

*Each application can only cover one of the two types. If applicants wish to apply for both a DP and a FP, or more than one DP or FP, then separate applications must be prepared and submitted, bearing in mind that a beneficiary can only receive a maximum EU contribution of EUR 10 million per call.*

*In each COFUND action, **a minimum of three researchers must be recruited/supported**. COFUND proposals proposing research training for fewer than three researchers will be deemed ineligible.*

### **A. Doctoral Programmes (DPs)**

DPs must address the development and broadening of the research competencies of [early-stage researchers](#). The training should follow the EU Principles on Innovative Doctoral Training<sup>6</sup>, namely excellent research standards, attractive employment and working conditions, interdisciplinary research options, exposure to industry and other relevant employment sectors, international networking, transferable skills training, and quality assurance of the programmes proposed. Substantial training modules, including digital ones, addressing key transferable skills common to all fields and fostering the culture of Open Science, innovation and entrepreneurship should also be supported.

DPs must implement research training activities for recruited researchers that lead to the award of a doctoral degree, which means that each researcher must be enrolled in a Doctoral Programme. Attention will be paid to qualitative and quantitative supervision and mentoring arrangements as well as to career guidance. A supervisor with adequate experience must be appointed for each researcher to provide the researchers with academic support and a career development plan. Researchers must have a genuine choice of supervisors and projects. It is highly recommended, whenever possible, that the institution(s) awarding the PhD be identified in the proposal.

The DP to be funded **must provide for call(s)**, which would allow the [ESRs](#) to propose their own project or to choose among research projects proposed to them. The selection of the researchers must follow an open, transparent, merit-based, impartial and equitable selection procedure, with vacancies internationally advertised and published, including on the EURAXESS website<sup>7</sup>. **Independent evaluators, from outside the partnership, with no conflict of interest, must be involved at all stages of the evaluation process.** A good balance between experts related to the beneficiary and independent experts must be ensured. The call planning (timing and number of calls) should be clearly explained in Part B of the proposal. This plan will become contractually binding for successful proposals and researchers can only be appointed through a call.

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<sup>6</sup> [https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/policy\\_library/principles\\_for\\_innovative\\_doctoral\\_training.pdf](https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/policy_library/principles_for_innovative_doctoral_training.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/>



The call(s) must also **specify the minimum gross salary offered to the researcher**, as set out in the COFUND proposal.

Proposals offering a wide variety of opportunities for researchers to experience secondments (including intersectoral ones), to benefit from training in research or transferable skills, as well as from innovative and interdisciplinary elements of the proposed programme, will be positively taken into account during the evaluations, when relevant. Such opportunities could be offered through a diverse set of partner organisations participating in the proposed programme. Alternatively, they could be offered through a single host organisation, if it has the structure and capacity to ensure a sufficiently broad range of these opportunities.

Examples of features found in COFUND DPs could include, *inter alia*:

*Inter-sectoral dimension:*

- Mentoring the recruited doctoral candidates by researchers and/or experts from the [non-academic sector](#);
- Exposing recruited researchers to various socio-economic actors gathered in a single campus or hub;
- Offering inter-sectoral placement opportunities to recruited researchers to develop their research projects;
- Inviting experts working in industry or other organisations from the [non-academic sector](#) to deliver courses on entrepreneurship, exploitation of research results, open science, ethics, patenting, policy making, creative thinking, citizen science, etc. to the recruited researchers.

*Interdisciplinary dimension:*

- Proposing shared courses or projects to the recruited doctoral candidates from different disciplines;
- Creating multi-disciplinary projects involving different research teams from the same or from different institutions;
- Offering possibilities for laboratory rotations or visits.

*International dimension:*

- Offering training possibilities abroad to acquire specific sets of skills;
- Developing partnerships, collaborations and/or implementation of joint degree awarding with research institutions, companies or other relevant socio-economic actors based in different countries.

The involvement of different participating organisations should exploit synergies between them to further strengthen the aforementioned international, interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral training and the transferable skills component of the doctoral training programme, in order to best prepare researchers for a wide range of career options.

## **B. Fellowship Programmes (FPs)**

FPs fund individual-driven research training and career development fellowships for [experienced researchers](#). The programmes supported **can have a single call or in the case of several calls must have regular selection rounds following fixed deadlines or regular cut-off dates** allowing a fair competition between applying researchers. There must be no more than 4 deadlines or cut-off dates per year. Calls for proposals must be advertised as widely as possible, including at international level, and on the EURAXESS website<sup>8</sup>. The call planning (timing and number of calls) should be clearly explained in Part B of the proposal. The call(s) must also specify the minimum gross salary offered to the researcher, as set out in the COFUND proposal.

Researchers must be selected following an open, transparent, merit-based, impartial and equitable selection procedure, based on **international peer review**. In particular, **there must be substantial involvement, at all stages of the evaluation process, of independent evaluators based in other countries, with no conflict of interest**. Selection committees must have an adequate gender balance and include members with the relevant expertise and experience to assess the candidates.

Mobility types supported by FPs may be similar to those supported under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowships<sup>9</sup>. Applicants are encouraged to include elements of cross-sectoral mobility and interdisciplinarity in their programmes. Ways by which this could be achieved for FPs may be extrapolated and adapted from the examples given for DPs on the previous page.

For fellowships where the main part of the research training activity takes place in a non-associated Third Country, the mobility rule is checked for the country of the partner organisation where the outgoing phase takes place. Should a return phase to a Member State/Associated Country be included as part of such fellowships (in addition to the outgoing phase), its duration should not exceed 50% of the total duration of the fellowship. This return phase may take place in any MS/AC.

**FPs must be based on individual-driven mobility**, which means that researchers should be able to freely choose a research topic and the appropriate host organisation fitting their individual needs. Typically mobility takes place to a given partner organisation however, with the REA project officer's prior approval, it is normally possible to add more partner organisations during project execution. **Programmes, which predefine the fellow's research work at a given location, do not conform to this principle**. In any case, FPs under COFUND will not support "recruitment schemes" to fill regular research vacancies.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/>

<sup>9</sup> Individual European Fellowships: (standard/CAR/Reintegration/S&E) and/or Individual Global Fellowships.

## **Common Features (DPs & FPs)**

*Applicants are encouraged to offer high-quality research options to researchers and to cover as many research disciplines as possible ("bottom-up" approach) with respect to excellence of the proposed research, but they can also focus on specific disciplines, especially for the DPs.*

Please note that programmes that prioritise specific research disciplines based on national or regional Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation (RIS3 strategies<sup>10</sup>) may also be supported.

***The duration of the programmes can vary, normally between 36 and 60 months*** from the starting date specified in the Grant Agreement, however shorter programmes are possible depending on the specificity of the proposed training. Note that for a DP we expect the fellow to be employed for at least the period taken to achieve a PhD. ***The majority of the programmes, however, tend to have the maximum duration indicated in the Work programme (60 months)***, as it allows for the organisation of several calls (if applicable), ensures enough time for the selection and recruitment of the researchers, and their respective implementation within the whole programme lifecycle.

**The length of any individual researcher's appointment must be at least 3 months.** However, recruitment should take into account the specificities of the programmes. DPs may take into account the national context in which the doctoral training is provided. For instance, **it is expected that DPs would offer recruitment of [ESRs](#) corresponding to the typical time needed to complete a PhD in the corresponding country. For FPs, the typical duration of the appointments of [ERs](#) varies from 12 to 36 months.**

In any case, the length of the recruitment should be sufficient to have a meaningful impact on enhancing skills and career perspectives of the involved researchers.

Applicants should present their strategy towards involving the supported researchers in ***the communication of their results***. This should be understood in the widest possible terms, i.e. not only limited to research results but also promoting the success of the entire training programme. Such activities aim at creating awareness, among the general public, of the research work performed and its implications for citizens and society. The type of outreach activities could range from press articles and participating in European Researchers' Night events<sup>11</sup> (recommended) to presenting science, research and innovation activities to students from schools or universities in order to develop their interest in research careers. Applicants should explain in the proposal how they intend to implement such activities within their programmes.

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<sup>10</sup>[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/informat/2014/smart\\_specialisation\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/informat/2014/smart_specialisation_en.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions/actions/european-researchers-night\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions/actions/european-researchers-night_en)

## Open Science in MSCA-COFUND

Open Science<sup>12</sup> refers to the objective under Horizon 2020 of increasing openness at all stages of the research life cycle. It notably reflects the ongoing evolution in the *modus operandi* of doing research and organising science, which promotes the use of new tools and workflows by researchers for transparency, reproducibility, dissemination and transfer of new knowledge. It also reflects the globalisation and enlargement of the scientific community to new actors.

**Examples of what open science encompasses** include open access to publications, open access to research data<sup>13</sup>, making research data FAIR<sup>14</sup> (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable), using new scientific reputation systems, using big data, fostering citizen science and addressing new research ethics and integrity issues that may emerge from the aforementioned developments of science practice.

- Hence, **incorporating such elements of open science in the training programme of MSCA COFUND researchers** could allow them to gain the knowledge and skills to implement these new ways of doing and organising research and help them to position themselves as leaders of the new generation of researchers.

- The beneficiary **must ensure open access (free of charge, online access for any user) to all peer-reviewed scientific publications** relating to results produced by the researchers (in the context of their COFUND fellowship).

- For COFUND projects **participating in the open Research Data Pilot on a voluntary basis**, regarding the digital research data generated during the project ('data'), the beneficiary **must take appropriate measures enabling researchers to:**

(a) deposit in a research data repository and take measures to make it possible for third parties to access, mine, exploit, reproduce and disseminate — free of charge for any user — the following:

(i) the data, including associated metadata, needed to validate the results presented in scientific publications as soon as possible;

(ii) other data, including associated metadata, as specified and within the deadlines laid down in their 'data management plans';

(b) provide information — via the repository — about tools and instruments at their disposal and necessary for validating the results (and — where possible — provide the tools and instruments themselves);

**and, if the programme is implemented by a partner organisation, ensure that it complies with this obligation.**

<sup>12</sup><http://ec.europa.eu/research/openscience/index.cfm>

<sup>13</sup>[http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants\\_manual/hi/oa\\_pilot/h2020-hi-oa-pilot-guide\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/oa_pilot/h2020-hi-oa-pilot-guide_en.pdf)

<sup>14</sup>[http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants\\_manual/hi/oa\\_pilot/h2020-hi-oa-data-mgt\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/oa_pilot/h2020-hi-oa-data-mgt_en.pdf)

**All research activities supported by Horizon 2020 must respect fundamental ethics principles and the relevant H2020 rules (see Annex 5, section 4).**

Equal opportunities should be understood in its widest sense. While it is not possible for an applicant to describe fully its potential actions, its equal opportunity policies and those of its partner organisations should be summarised. The independent experts will be asked to scrutinise how these provide equality of opportunity to the researchers, equality of treatment during the selection process and equality of support, during their fellowships, to the successful researchers.

Applicants are reminded that this is one of the points mentioned under the criterion 'Excellence' and the independent evaluators will be briefed to take the above into account when assigning scores to this criterion.

**Applicants having benefited from COFUND under previous calls** (under the Seventh Framework Programme or under Horizon 2020) **must explain how their proposal adds value compared to their previous grant(s)**. Added value could take the form of increased networking with organisations in less represented countries or capacity building measures there to further structure the European Research Area. It could also take the form of enhancing the researchers' working conditions compared to what has been implemented before, of diversifying their training and research options.

### **Eligible Researchers (DPs & FPs)**

**Researchers to be recruited within either programme are required to undertake trans-national mobility** (i.e. move from one country to another, see definition of the [mobility rule](#) of this guide).

If an **existing programme** intends to deviate from the [mobility rule](#), for instance if a different definition for trans-national mobility was previously applied within the existing programme, it must be justified in the proposal. For new programmes, no exception to this rule is allowed.

Limitations regarding the researchers' origins and destinations should be avoided. Programmes limiting their access will have to provide justifications of the added value to do so, and will be carefully assessed by the expert evaluators. However, if the programme or part of the programme is implemented by a partner organisation established in a [TC listed in General Annex A to the H2020 Work Programme](#) or if a secondment to an organisation in any TC constitutes the main part of the research training activities, researchers must be nationals or long-term residents of a MS or [AC](#). Long-term residence means a period of legal and continuous residence within EU Member States or Horizon 2020 Associated Countries of at least 5 consecutive years. Periods of absence from the territory of the Member State or Horizon 2020 Associated Country shall be taken into account for the calculation of this period where they are shorter than 6 consecutive months and do not exceed in total 10 months within this period of five years.

Support cannot be awarded to researchers who are already permanently employed by the organisation intending to host them.

The [beneficiary](#) may, in parallel and through other resources than COFUND (for example, European Structural and Investment Funds), support researchers that do not comply with the [mobility rule](#) to participate in the Doctoral/ Fellowship Programme.

Researchers must be dedicated full time to the research training activities unless duly justified for personal or family reasons. This also means that a researcher cannot benefit from two Marie Skłodowska-Curie (or "Marie Curie" under FP7) Actions grants at the same time. Complementary skills training is an important part of the programme and is therefore strongly encouraged, bearing in mind it should not jeopardise the research training. For example, any excessive teaching load that would compromise the ability of a fellow to adequately lead and complete his/her research training activities is not acceptable.

#### **4. Examples of a COFUND programme**

**Note:** We emphasise that any example given in this Guide for Applicants does not imply that there will be a preference shown to similar programmes.

##### **A. Doctoral Programmes (DPs)**

DPs are typically proposed by funding bodies, universities, research institutions or a member of a network of organisations offering doctoral training programmes/schools, and ensuring an **international, interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral training for doctoral candidates, either on their own or** through collaborations with [partner organisations](#).

Example 1:

*A centre of excellence at a Dutch university proposes a DP in the field of neuroscience. The programme will bring together departments of medicine, physics and engineering and will recruit 10 eligible [ESRs](#) in order to build upon an existing DP and offer an innovative combination of research and transferable skills training. Eight [partner organisations](#), including a strong [non-academic sector](#) presence, will also contribute to the researchers' training. Although the departments themselves will host and provide the infrastructure and day-to-day training for the recruited researchers, they will exploit a series of complementarities with partner organisations from both the academic and [non-academic sector](#) in order to offer secondments and training. Secondments to these [partner organisations](#), based in both EU Member States and [Associated Countries](#), will ensure exposure to the [non-academic sector](#) as well as specialised training modules that the departments would not otherwise be able to offer.*

In this example, the [beneficiary](#) takes full responsibility for implementing the proposed training programme, while the recruited researchers are expected to benefit from the informal network with the [partner organisations](#) during the training period. Although most of their training period will be spent at the [beneficiary's](#) premises, active mobility of the recruited researchers towards the [partner organisations](#) in the form of secondments will be expected.

Example 2:

*In its Smart Specialisation Strategy, a regional authority has identified as a weakness a lack of international human resources at universities in its region. As one of the measures to tackle this issue, it decides to set up a funding programme for doctoral candidates from abroad. The main research funding agency in this region applies for MSCA COFUND for in total 50 research positions to be divided over the 5-6 universities that are located in this region. Job vacancies are drawn up by the universities and are widely advertised, including a description of the work that has an international, interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral dimension. The programme itself is managed by the research funding agency, which is also the [beneficiary](#) of the COFUND action.*

In this example, the beneficiary takes full responsibility for the training programme while the recruited researchers are expected to benefit from the international, interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral dimension of the training implemented by the universities.

However, the following example **would not** fulfil the minimum requirements of a COFUND proposal:

Example 3:

*A university established in a Member State proposes a doctoral school, selecting 10 [ESRs](#) who are residents in that very same Member State, every year, without advertising its vacancies internationally.*

In this example, restricting the doctoral school to residents, not respecting the [mobility rule](#), and having the selection of researchers done internally without publishing the vacancies do not meet the requirements and philosophy of the COFUND DPs.

## **B. Fellowship Programmes (FPs)**

Similarly FPs are typically proposed by funding bodies, universities, research institutions or a member of a network of organisations offering fellowship training programmes/schools, and ensuring an **international, interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral training for researchers**. Collaborations with [partner organisations](#), including from the [non-academic sector](#), as well as innovative elements of the proposed training, will be taken into account during the evaluations.

Example 1:

*A FP set up by a national ministry or a regional authority in a Member State that aims to attract experienced researchers working in other Member States, [Associated](#) or [non-associated Third Countries](#) to the country or region of the programme.*

Example 2:

*A governmental organisation established in an [Associated Country](#) that offers a special scheme for the reintegration of researchers who have spent at least three years in a [non-associated Third Country](#).*

Example 3:

*A FP operated by a private non-profit organisation established in a Member State that so far funded only fellowships of experienced researchers within the country, now decides to open for trans-national mobility and offers fellowships in other Member States, [Associated](#) or [non-associated Third Countries](#).*

However, the following example **would not** fulfil the minimum requirements of a FP:

Example 4:

*A programme where a pre-defined number of positions would be offered by a research institute, with no option for the researcher to choose her/his project and/or host organisation.*

In this example, the programme would clearly not respect the principle of an open call and individual-driven mobility, required for the FP, as it would offer jobs rather than having a competitive call for proposals.

All programmes in general (Fellowship and Doctoral) must provide for an evaluation process where the pre-selection of candidates by the beneficiary before the evaluation takes place is avoided.

## **5. Examples of possible synergies and complementarities between COFUND and European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF)**

The underlying objective of synergies and complementarities between MSCA COFUND and ESIF is to achieve more competitiveness, jobs and growth in the EU in a strategic and cohesion-oriented manner. Beneficiaries setting up a COFUND project may enlarge the scope and increase the impact of their programme with additional co-funding from ESIF. These synergies can be of particular interest to regions/countries that have planned such kinds of objectives and priorities in their ESIF Operational Programmes (incl. widening<sup>15</sup> countries).

In practice, **cost items other than the living allowance and management costs may be supported through ESIF, provided that such modalities/possibility are foreseen in the relevant regional/national operational programmes.** For example, costs relating to the development of research infrastructures or research costs relating to equipment purchase could be supported through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Costs

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<sup>15</sup> Widening countries, as defined in the "Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation" part of the Horizon 2020 Work Programme 2018-2020.



relating to training and networking activities of the programme, the travel and mobility allowances to take up the trainings could be supported through the European Social Fund (ESF).

Finally, programmes that prioritise specific scientific disciplines based on research and innovation smart specialisation strategies (RIS3)<sup>16</sup> may also be supported through these synergies.

A few examples of how these synergies may be used are given below:

#### Example 1

*A new research centre is being created in a specific region of a certain MS, the building of its large research infrastructures being financed by the ESIF. It aims at attracting promising researchers in several fields of expertise and in particular in recruiting young researchers. However, no PhD programmes exist in this Region to support training of researchers in those scientific areas. The research centre therefore decides to apply for COFUND, to help establish new DP at the local University covering training in those scientific fields of interest. As part of their doctoral training, the recruited researchers shall follow some research training abroad in order to gain international experience and to diversify their skills and working methods.*

#### Example 2

*An existing FP run by a University established in a MS is lacking an international and inter-sectoral dimension in the current training it proposes and consequently failing to recruit sufficient researchers who will meet the increasing and diversified needs triggered by its evolving research activities. In order to address this issue, the University decides to apply for ESIF to fund national researchers who will experience working in the private sector, while applying for COFUND to support international researchers' recruitment and to improve the quality and streamlining of the selection and recruitment procedures of the programme.*

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<sup>16</sup> Smart specialisation strategy means the national or regional innovation strategies which set priorities in order to build competitive advantage by developing and matching research and innovation own strengths to business needs in order to address emerging opportunities and market developments in a coherent manner, while avoiding duplication and fragmentation of efforts; a smart specialisation strategy may take the form of, or be included in, a national or regional research and innovation (R&I) strategic policy framework. The development of smart specialisation strategies through involving national or regional Managing Authorities and stakeholders such as universities and other higher education institution, industry and social partners in an entrepreneurial discovery process is compulsory for the regions and Member States that wish to invest ERDF into research and innovation. Smart specialisation strategies shall include up-stream and down-stream actions with Horizon 2020. See: RIS3 Guide: <http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/s3pguide>

### Example 3

*A research organisation established in a MS applies for COFUND and is successful. The living allowance for the recruited doctoral candidates and the management costs for the programme are co-financed by the COFUND grant. The organisation then decides to apply for ESIF to get financial support to fund a part of the research costs (e.g. infrastructure or large equipment with ERDF), and a part of the networking and training costs (mainly with ESF) related to the DP (but not covered by the COFUND action), provided that all ESIF rules are respected.*

### Example 4

*The ministry of Education and Research in a given MS has set-up a postdoctoral fellowship programme for researchers working in the country. This fellowship programme is co-financed by the ministry itself and the European Social Fund to enhance the skills of the national R&I human resources and increase the competitiveness of the country's research organisations. The ministry decides to apply for COFUND to open up this programme to international researchers (co-financed through COFUND) and to enhance the quality and quantity of its training options (e.g. offering new intersectoral and interdisciplinary research training opportunities).*

For more information about possible synergies between European Structural and Investment Funds and MSCA COFUND, see Annex 2, §1.3 (p.66) of the document below (follow this link):

[Enabling synergies between European Structural and Investment Funds, Horizon 2020 and other research, innovation and competitiveness-related Union programmes](#)

For more information on Regional/National Operational Programmes (OP) from the European Structural and Investment Funds at your disposal, you may follow these links and contact your regional/national Managing Authorities:

- OP financed under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) or the Cohesion Fund: [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/atlas/programmes/](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/atlas/programmes/)
- OP financed under the European Social Fund (ESF): <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=576&langId=en>

## **6. Financial Regime**

The financial support for COFUND takes the form of "unit costs", i.e. fixed amounts per unit of measure. In the case of COFUND, the unit of measure is the eligible person-month.

**The unit costs cover researcher unit costs and institutional unit costs.**

## **A. Researcher Unit Costs**

The EU contribution to the researcher costs must be used **exclusively for the living allowance provided for the benefit of the researcher** appointed under the programme. For researchers recruited under an employment contract<sup>17</sup>, it corresponds to EUR 1 935/person-month<sup>18</sup> for early-stage researchers in DPs, and to EUR 2 740/person-month<sup>19</sup> for experienced researchers in FPs.

Additionally, according to the specifications provided in the MSCA [Work Programme](#), the sum of the living allowance (salaries, social security contributions, taxes and other costs included in the remuneration) and the mobility allowance, offered by the programme to the researcher **must in no case** be lower than the following figures:

- For the [early-stage researchers](#), recruited under an employment contract/equivalent direct contract<sup>17</sup>, a minimum of EUR 2 709/person-month;
- For the [experienced researchers](#), recruited under an employment contract/equivalent direct contract<sup>17</sup>, a minimum of EUR 3 836/person-month.

These amounts represent the minimum total costs to be paid to the researcher. There is no obligatory percentage cofunding apart from the minimum total costs stated above to be paid to the researcher.

In practice, this means that the [beneficiary](#) must, at a minimum, ensure the necessary funds to cover the difference between the EU contribution (EUR 1 935 or EUR 2 740/person-month, for [ESR](#) and [ER](#), respectively) and the minimum amounts for living and mobility allowances (EUR 2 709 or EUR 3 836/person-month, for [ESR](#) and [ER](#), respectively).

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<sup>17</sup> Or other direct contract with equivalent benefits, including social security coverage.

<sup>18</sup> This figure represents the EU contribution as established in Commission Decision No C(2017)6855.

<sup>19</sup> This figure represents the EU contribution as established in Commission Decision No C(2017)6855.

These amounts are specified in the table below:

Researcher category	EU contribution to living allowance for researchers recruited under an employment contract (EUR/person-month)	Beneficiary contribution to [living allowance + mobility allowance] for researchers recruited under an employment contract (EUR/ person-month)
Early-Stage Researchers ( <a href="#">ESR</a> )	1 935	minimum 774
Experienced Researchers ( <a href="#">ER</a> )	2 740	minimum 1 096

Note that all applicants have to specify and **explain in their proposal the total amounts that will be provided for the benefit of the researcher and for the organisation(s) that is hosting the researcher**. This information will be needed for the expert evaluators to assess the adequacy of employment and working conditions of the researchers.

The [beneficiary](#) or the partner organisation implementing the programme must recruit each eligible researcher under an employment contract or other direct contract with equivalent benefits, including social security coverage. **For both the DPs and the FPs fixed-amount fellowships are only permitted where national law would prohibit the possibility of an employment contract/equivalent direct contract** and only with the prior approval of the Research Executive Agency. In such cases, the [beneficiary/partner organisation](#) must ensure that minimum social security coverage is provided to the researcher for at least sickness, parental benefits, invalidity and accidents at work and occupational diseases.

When employment contracts/equivalent direct contracts are prohibited by law, and fixed-amount fellowships agreements would be planned, then the EU contribution on the basis of unit costs mentioned in the table above and the required minimum allowances for the benefit of the researchers would be reduced by half.

The European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the recruitment of researchers offer a reference framework for the employment of researchers<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> [https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/brochures/am509774cee\\_en\\_e4.pdf](https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/brochures/am509774cee_en_e4.pdf)

## ***B. Institutional Unit Costs***

In addition to the researcher unit cost, there will be an EU contribution for institutions based on unit costs, which amounts to **EUR 325/person-month for each eligible researcher**<sup>21</sup>. These costs must be used **towards the management of the programme**. This EU contribution is expected to be shared between the [beneficiary](#) and the partner organisation(s), if any. It is recommended that such arrangements be described in the partnership agreement signed between the beneficiary and the partner organisation(s).

**Other cost items (such as mobility allowance, family allowance, research, training and networking costs, travel, and indirect costs)** may be funded through other resources, including other EU funds such as the European Structural and Investment Funds, but not through funding from the Horizon 2020 Framework Programme.

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<sup>21</sup> This figure represents the EU contribution as established in Commission Decision No C(2017) 6855.

## Example of Budget:

In this example, the amount proposed for (living allowance+mobility allowance) for an Experienced Researcher (ER) complies with the minimum requirement: (€ 4800+500) = €5300) > € 3836

As a reminder, required minimum amounts for monthly living + mobility allowances:

- ESR: € 2709
- ER: € 3836

Other cost items may be funded through other resources (including ESIF funds)

Example (Fellowship programme – ER)

Cost item	Total cost [€ per person-month]	EU contribution [€ per person-month]
Living allowance	4800	2740
Mobility allowance	500	
Research costs	500	
Management costs	600	325
Indirect costs	600	
Total	7000	3065

## Budget Calculations

Applicants are **not** required to indicate the amount of the estimated EU contribution in their proposal. This will be automatically calculated from the information provided in the Part A forms of the proposal using the number of person-months requested in the proposal and the respective unit costs indicated in the [Work Programme](#).

**It is critical that the information given in Part A Forms is identical to the information given in proposal Part B (see Table 1). In case of discrepancy, the information provided in the Part A will take precedence, unless there is an obvious clerical error.**

Your budget must be presented in euro.

*Please note:* For this call, the maximum EU contribution is EUR 10 million per [beneficiary](#).

## COFUND Key Points

### Common features

- One single beneficiary from an EU Member State or Associated Country, filling the A Forms electronically and submitting the proposal Part B. Partner organisations that recruit researchers in the context of a Doctoral or Fellowship programme must be established in an EU Member State, H2020 Associated Country, or Third Country listed in General Annex A to the H2020 Work Programme. Partner organisations providing secondments and other training or career development opportunities, can be established in any country, i.e. in any Member State, Associated Country, or non-associated Third Country (including those not listed in Annex A). All partner organisations, known at the time of proposal submission, must provide a letter of commitment on headed institution stationary dated after the call opening and signed by an individual who has the authority to make the commitment on behalf of the partner organisation in Part B of the proposal and be included in the overview of all the identified Partner Organisations provided in Table 2.
- Eligibility of researchers applies at the date of recruitment/the call deadline of the co-funded programme. The beneficiary can choose the reference date.
- Researchers must be offered employment contracts or other direct contracts with equivalent benefits, including social security coverage. Fixed-amounts fellowships would only be allowed in exceptional cases, where the national law would prohibit employment contracts/equivalent direct contracts, and only with the prior approval of the Research Executive Agency.
- Trans-national [mobility rule](#) applies to all researchers supported, unless otherwise specified in Annex 1 for existing programmes.
- The vacancy notice must include the minimum gross salary offered to the researcher, as set out in the COFUND proposal.
- Selection of researchers must follow an open, transparent, merit-based, impartial and equitable procedure.
- Independent evaluators from outside the partnership, with no conflict of interest, involved at all stages of the selection process.
- Vacancies/calls must be internationally advertised and published.

### Doctoral Programmes (DPs)

- Programmes aim at the selection of [early-stage researchers](#) as doctoral candidates.
- Recruitment of researchers corresponding to typical time needed to complete a PhD in the corresponding country.
- Candidates to the programmes should be given freedom to propose their own project or to choose among research projects of their preference. There must be a genuine choice of supervisors and projects.

### Fellowship Programmes (FP)

- Programmes aim at the selection of [experienced researchers](#). Fellowships must be granted via a single call for proposals or regular calls for proposals, internationally advertised and published, with fixed deadlines or regular cut-off dates (max. 4 per year).
- Selection of researchers based on international peer review.
- Typical recruitment of researchers' duration: from 12 to 36 months.
- Candidates to the programmes should be able to submit proposals, with the freedom to draft their research project and to choose in which host organisation they wish to carry out their research work.

**Please Note: (DPs and FPs):**

- Programmes tend to have a total duration of 60 months (i.e. the maximum duration).
- Each application can only cover one of the two types of programmes. If applicants would like to apply for both programmes, two separate applications must be submitted.
- Note that under H2020, there no longer is a phase of project negotiation. Evaluators will therefore not make recommendations for improvements. This implies that proposals must clearly conform to the requirements of the COFUND scheme (e.g. open and international publication, free choice of topic and host, etc.) to be evaluated positively.

## **7. MSCA Special Needs Allowance**

The MSCA pay particular attention to physical accessibility and inclusion and provide financial support for the additional costs entailed by recruited researchers with disabilities whose long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments<sup>22</sup> are as such that their participation in MSCA would not be possible without extra financial support. Therefore, beneficiaries are now able to apply to the Research Executive Agency for a dedicated special needs grant in COFUND. This grant, which takes the form of a Coordination and Support Action (CSA), will cover the additional costs that researchers with disabilities face due to the increased costs of their mobility. It can be used, for example, to ensure necessary assistance by third persons or for adapting their work environment<sup>23</sup>. It cannot cover costs, which are already covered by another source, such as social security or health insurance.

A request for such an allowance can be made by the COFUND beneficiary. The request must be individual-based, include an estimated budget and explain the specific participation need(s) of the researcher concerned. With the help of independent experts, the Agency will evaluate the request and decide based on the need(s) of the researcher and the budget availability.

The information of the possibility to obtain such allowance should be added in the call publication for the Doctoral and Fellowship programmes.

The special needs allowance will take the form of a lump sum awarded in the form of a low value grant to an identified beneficiary<sup>24</sup> and will cover up to 100% of the eligible costs. It will be limited to a maximum of EUR 60,000 per researcher.

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<sup>22</sup> See Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

<sup>23</sup> See Article 5 of the Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation.

<sup>24</sup> This grant will be awarded without call for proposals in line with Article 195 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and Article 11(2) of the Rules for participation and dissemination in "Horizon 2020 – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020)", Regulation (EU) No 1290/2013.



Only researchers with disabilities who are eligible researchers under a Horizon 2020 MSCA grant are eligible for the special needs grant.

## Annexes

Annex 1	Timetable and Specific Information for this Call
Annex 2	Evaluation Criteria and Procedures to be applied for this Call
Annex 3	Instructions for Completing Part A of the Proposal
Annex 4	Instructions for Drafting Part B of the Proposal
Annex 5	Part B template

## Annex 1 – Timetable and Specific Information for this Call

The **Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions [Work Programme](#)** provides the legal background and conditions to be considered when submitting a proposal to this call. It describes the specificities of the COFUND action to be addressed in the proposal and the details of how it should be implemented. The [Work Programme](#) is available on the Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal call page, where the conditions for the call are described. Please consult these documents.

### Indicative timetable for this call:

Call Opening	<i>08 April 2020</i>
Deadline for submission of proposals	<i>29 September 2020 at 17:00:00, Brussels local time</i>
Evaluation of proposals	<i>November 2020</i>
Information on the outcome of the evaluation	<i>February 2021</i>
Indicative date for the signing of grant agreements	<i>May 2021</i>

**Indicative call budget:** € 100 million.

€ 40 million is allocated to the Doctoral Programmes.

€ 60 million is allocated to the Fellowship Programmes.

### Further information and help

The Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal contains links to other sources that you may find useful for preparing and submitting your proposal.

## **Useful Information**

Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal:

<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/>

Work Programme MSCA 2018-2020

[http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/wp/2018-2020/main/h2020-wp1820-msca\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/wp/2018-2020/main/h2020-wp1820-msca_en.pdf)

Horizon 2020 Rules for participation:

[http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/legal\\_basis/rules\\_participation/h2020-rules-participation\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/legal_basis/rules_participation/h2020-rules-participation_en.pdf)

European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers:

[https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/brochures/am509774cee\\_en\\_e4.pdf](https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/brochures/am509774cee_en_e4.pdf)

EU Principles for Innovative Doctoral Training:

[https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/policy\\_library/principles\\_for\\_innovative\\_doctoral\\_training.pdf](https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/policy_library/principles_for_innovative_doctoral_training.pdf)

## **General Sources for Support**

Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions website:

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions/>

EURAXESS website:

<https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/>

The Commission's Horizon 2020 Enquiry Service:

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/enquiries>

National Contact Points:

<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/support/ncp>

How to register your organisation:

<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/how-to-participate/participant-register>

COFUND handbook, success stories and other useful materials

<https://www.net4mobilityplus.eu/>

## **Specialised and Technical Assistance**

Submission Service Help Desk:  
[DIGIT-EFP7-SEP-SUPPORT@ec.europa.eu](mailto:DIGIT-EFP7-SEP-SUPPORT@ec.europa.eu)

IPR help desk:  
<http://www.iprhelpdesk.eu/>

Ethics section on the H2020 Online Manual:  
[https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/cross-cutting-issues/ethics\\_en.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/cross-cutting-issues/ethics_en.htm)

## **Annex 2 – Evaluation Criteria – Procedures to be applied for this Call**

### **1. General**

The evaluation of proposals is carried out by the Research Executive Agency (REA) with the assistance of independent experts.

REA staff ensure that the process is fair and in line with the principles contained in the Commission's Guidelines<sup>25</sup> and the relevant sections of the MSCA Work Programme.

Experts perform evaluations on a personal basis, not as representatives of their employer, their country or any other entity. They are independent, impartial and objective, and behave in a professional manner. In addition, an independent observer will be appointed by the REA to observe and report on the evaluation process. The observer gives independent advice to the REA on the conduct and fairness of the evaluation sessions, on the way award criteria are applied by the experts and provides recommendations on how to improve the evaluation procedures. The observer will not express views on the proposals under examination or on the experts' opinions on the proposals.

Proposals are submitted in a single stage and evaluated in one step by the experts against all award criteria.

Conflicts of interest: under the terms of the expert contract, all experts must declare beforehand any conflict of interest and must immediately inform the responsible REA staff member if they detect a conflict of interest during the course of the evaluation.

Confidentiality: the expert contract also requires experts to maintain strict confidentiality with respect to the whole evaluation process. They must follow any instruction given by the REA to ensure this. Under no circumstance may an expert attempt to contact an applicant on his/her own account, either during the evaluation or afterwards.

### **2. Before the Evaluation**

Once received by the REA, proposals are registered and acknowledged and their contents entered into a database to support the evaluation process. Admissibility and eligibility criteria for each proposal are also checked by REA staff before the evaluation begins. Proposals which do not fulfil these criteria will not be included in the evaluation.

For this call a proposal will only be considered **admissible** if it meets all of the following conditions:

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<sup>25</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants\\_manual/pse/h2020-guide-pse\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/pse/h2020-guide-pse_en.pdf)

- It is submitted in the electronic submission system before the call deadline;
- It is readable, accessible and printable.

Incomplete proposals may be considered inadmissible. Therefore, the proposal must include the requested administrative forms in Part A and the proposal description in Part B (with all sections and supporting documents).

A proposal will only be considered **eligible** if it meets all of the following conditions:

- It involves one [beneficiary](#) from a MS or [AC that funds or manages Doctoral Programmes or Fellowship Programmes for researchers](#);
- The content of the proposal corresponds to the topic(s) and funding scheme(s), including the specific conditions set out in the relevant parts of the MSCA Work Programme.

### **3. Selection criteria**

#### **Operational capacity**

The **operational capacity** of the beneficiary is assessed at the evaluation stage. Operational capacity shows whether an applicant has the operational resources and capacity to implement the action, and, in particular, the parts in the proposal for which it is responsible.

If the experts evaluating the proposal reach a consensus that the applicant lacks sufficient operational capacity, then the proposal would be rejected.

### **4. Award Criteria**

Each proposal will be assessed independently by at least three experts chosen by the REA from the pool of experts taking part in this evaluation. An expert will be designated as the proposal 'rapporteur' and will assume additional responsibilities during the evaluation process.

Each criterion will be scored out of 5. Decimal points may be given. The scoring table is the following:

- 0 – **The proposal fails** to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.
- 1 – **Poor.** The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
- 2 – **Fair.** The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.
- 3 – **Good.** The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.
- 4 – **Very good.** The proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.
- 5 – **Excellent.** The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

An example of the evaluation forms used by the experts will be made available on the Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal.

Evaluation scores will be awarded for each of the three criteria (and not for the sub-elements of each criterion). However, these elements are considered by the experts in the assessment of the criteria.

The proposal will be evaluated against the award criteria defined in the [Work Programme](#), as follows:

<b>Excellence</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Quality and efficiency of the implementation</b>
<b>Quality of the selection / recruitment process for the researchers</b> (transparency, composition and organisation of selection committees, evaluation criteria, equal opportunities)	Enhancing the <b>potential and future career prospects</b> of researchers; <b>Strengthening human resources</b> on regional, national or international level	<b>Coherence, effectiveness and appropriateness of the work plan</b>
<b>Quality of the research options offered by the programme</b> in terms of science, interdisciplinarity, intersectorality and level of transnational mobility	<b>Aligning practices of participating organisations with the principles set out by the EU for human resources development in research and innovation</b>	<b>Appointment conditions of researchers</b>
<b>Quality of career guidance and training</b> , including supervision arrangements, training in transferable skills	Quality of the proposed measures to exploit and <b>disseminate</b> the results	<b>Competence of the participant</b> to implement the programme
	Quality of the proposed measures to <b>communicate</b> the results to different target audiences	
<b>Weighting</b>		
<b>50%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Priority in case of ex aequo</b>		
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>

**An overall threshold of 70% will be applied to the total weighted score.**

## Annex 3 – Instructions for Completing "Part A" of the Proposal

Proposals for this call must be submitted electronically, using the electronic submission service of the European Commission accessible from the call page on the Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal.

In Part A the applicant will be asked for administrative details and information that will be used in the evaluation and further processing of the proposal. **Part A constitutes an integral part of the proposal and will be reviewed by expert evaluators.** Details of the work the applicant intends to carry out will be described in Part B (see Annex 4 and 5 of this guide).

The electronic submission service provides guidance on how to complete the Part A, which includes the following sections:

- Section 1: General information about the proposal (including the abstract)
- Section 2: Administrative data
- Section 3: Budget (request for funding in terms of researcher person-months)
- Section 4: Ethics issues table
- Section 5: Call specific questions

### 1. The Concept of Panels

The evaluation is organised in two different panels:

- A) Doctoral Programmes; and
- B) Fellowship Programmes.

In the electronic submission tool, the applicant chooses the panel to which the proposal will be associated.

### 2. Budget

**The budget of the proposal will be calculated automatically by the system when the applicants enter the total number of person-months requested for the programme** (i.e. the result of the multiplication of the number of researchers to be recruited by the duration of the researchers' appointments, multiplied with the rates defined in the [Work Programme](#)). Care should be taken when entering this data.

Expert evaluators will score the appropriateness of the proposed number of person-months for the programme under the "Quality and efficiency of the implementation" criterion.



## Annex 4 – Instructions for Drafting "Part B" of the Proposal

This annex provides guidelines for drafting Part B of your COFUND proposal. It will help you to present important aspects of your planned work in a way that will enable the experts to make an effective assessment against the award criteria (see Annex 2).

*A maximum length of 30 pages is applicable to Part B (Section 1 to 3) of the proposal. You must keep your proposal within these limits. Expert evaluators will be instructed to disregard any excess pages.*

Please do not consider the page limit as a target! It is in your interest to keep your text as concise as possible, since experts rarely view unnecessarily long proposals in a positive light.

Part B of the proposal contains the details of the proposed research and training programmes along with the practical arrangements planned to implement them. They will be used by the independent experts to undertake their assessment. We would therefore advise you to address each of the award criteria as outlined in the sections below. Please note that the explanatory notes below serve to explain the award criteria without being exhaustive.

**Applicants must structure their proposal according to the headings indicated in the Part B proposal template**

Please note that this call will be a single-stage proposal submission and evaluation procedure. A Word version of the submission template can be downloaded from the electronic submission services of the Commission. Applicants must ensure that proposals conform to this layout and to the instructions given in this Guide for Applicants.

The following formatting conditions apply:

The reference font for the body text of H2020 proposals is Times New Roman (Windows platforms), Times/Times New Roman (Apple platforms) or Nimbus Roman No. 9 L (Linux distributions).

The use of a different font for the body text is not advised and is subject to the conditions that the font is legible and that its use does not significantly shorten the representation of the proposal in number of pages compared to using the reference font (for example with a view to bypassing the page limit).

The minimum font size allowed is 11 points. Standard character spacing and a minimum of single line spacing is to be used. Text elements other than the body text, such as headers, foot/end notes, captions, formulae, may deviate, but must be legible; however, these elements should not be used as mechanism to circumvent the rules. For example, text within a table or graphical element should be kept to a minimum.

The page size is A4, and all margins (top, bottom, left, right) should be at least 15 mm (not including any footers or headers).

Please make sure that **Part B of your proposal carries, as a header to each page, the proposal acronym and the scheme to which you are applying (i.e. DP or FP)**. All pages should also be numbered in a single series on the footer of the page to prevent errors during handling. It is recommended that you use the numbering format "Part B - Page X of Y".

**Incomplete proposals considered inadmissible will not be evaluated. You will only be able to upload one single PDF file, which should include the sections, 0 to 5 (see below). If you upload twice the second file will overwrite the first.**

**For more information about Proposal Submission and Evaluation:**  
[http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants\\_manual/pse/h2020-guide-pse\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/pse/h2020-guide-pse_en.pdf)

### **Scientific Misconduct**

Please note that the REA takes the issue of scientific misconduct very seriously. In line with the Horizon 2020 Rules for Participation, appropriate action will be taken against any applicants found to have misrepresented, fabricated or plagiarised any part of their proposal. Applicants will be required to make a "declaration on honour" in Part A of the proposal.

## **Annex 5 – Part B template**

### **START PAGE**

MARIE SKŁODOWSKA-CURIE ACTIONS

**Co-funding of regional, national and  
international programmes (COFUND)**

**Call: H2020-MSCA-COFUND-2020**

### **PART B**

“PROPOSAL ACRONYM”

**This proposal is to be evaluated as:**

**[DP][FP]  
[delete as appropriate]**

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Part B - Page X of Y

## Table of Contents

In drafting PART B of the proposal, applicants must follow the structure outlined below.

### 0. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAMME (Maximum 2 pages)

#### INFORMATION ON THE BENEFICIARY

---

**START PAGE COUNT**

#### 1. EXCELLENCE

#### 2. IMPACT

#### 3. QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION

---

**STOP PAGE COUNT**

#### 4. ETHICS ASPECTS

#### 5. LETTERS OF COMMITMENT FROM PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

*NB: Applicants must ensure that sections 1-3 do not exceed the limit of 30 pages.*

*Please note that the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers promoting open recruitment and attractive working conditions are recommended to be endorsed and applied by all the funded participating organisations in the MSCA. Some of these principles are reflected as obligations in the Grant Agreement and are therefore contractually binding.*

**0. General description of the programme (Maximum 2 pages, not evaluated)**

**INFORMATION ON THE BENEFICIARY**

<b>Name of Beneficiary</b>	<b>Beneficiary short name</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Academic (Y/N)</b>

Under each sub-criterion it is advised to develop at least the following points:

## **1. Excellence**

### **1.1 Quality of the selection/recruitment process for the researchers (transparency, composition and organisation of selection committees, evaluation criteria, equal opportunities)**

#### Demonstrate the transparency of the selection process of the researchers

- Dissemination of the calls in appropriate ways;
- Information provided to the candidates (e.g. conditions of the fellowship, host institution, evaluation process, results, review/appeal, etc.);
- Eligibility criteria and application requirements;
- Any other relevant point.

#### Describe the organisation of selection process

- Composition of committees involved in the different stages of the process (i.e. eligibility check, evaluation, selection, appeal);
- Selection of experts;
- Fellows/Researchers' selection workflow and powers entrusted to the different actors;
- Any other relevant point.

#### List the Evaluation Criteria

- Criteria/sub-criteria for the selection of researchers;
- Any other relevant point (scoring, thresholds, etc.).

#### Ensure equal opportunities

Equal opportunities should be understood in its widest sense. While it is not possible for an applicant to describe fully its potential actions, its equal opportunity policies and those of its partner organisations should be summarised. The independent experts will be asked to scrutinise how these provide equality of opportunity to the researchers, equality of treatment during the selection process and equality of support, during their fellowships, to the successful researchers.

### **1.2. Quality of the research options offered by the programme in terms of science, interdisciplinarity, intersectorality and level of transnational mobility**

- Excellence of the research programme;
- Quality of the research options in terms of interdisciplinary research options, intersectorality (mobility between the academic and non-academic sector) and international networking;
- Any other relevant point

### **1.3. Quality of career guidance and training, including supervision arrangements, training in transferable skills**

#### Describe the supervision arrangements

- Supervision arrangements, quality and experience of supervisors should be described (especially for DPs), as well as how progress of the fellows will be monitored and their career development promoted and guided.
- Any other relevant point.

#### Describe the training

- Training on research skills within the appropriate discipline(s) and/or to gain new skills;
- Support and/or additional training in non-research oriented transferable skills (i.e. grant writing, project management, IPR, entrepreneurship, training for job interviews), 'open science skills' (i.e. learn researchers how to open access to their publications, manage and share their research data, be trained in ethics and research integrity, on gender balance in teams and research content, learn to communicate with the general public and to even integrate citizens in research design and processes including through citizen science);
- Any other relevant point.

## **2. Impact**

### **2.1 Enhancing the potential and future career prospects of researchers; strengthening human resources on regional, national or international level**

- Describe how the potential and future career perspectives of selected researchers will be enhanced;
- Outline how the proposed programme will impact on strengthening research human resources on regional, national or international level;
- Any other relevant point.

### **2.2 Aligning practices of participating organisations with the principles set out by the EU for human resources development in research and innovation**

- Describe how the programme will contribute to the implementation of principles set out by the EU for the human resources development in R&I (such as Charter and Code<sup>26</sup>, or the Principles for Innovative Doctoral Training for DPs) at the participating organisations;
- Any other relevant point.

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<sup>26</sup> [https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/brochures/am509774cee\\_en\\_e4.pdf](https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/brochures/am509774cee_en_e4.pdf)

### **2.3 Quality of the proposed measures to exploit and disseminate the results**

- Describe plans and procedures for exploitation and dissemination of results towards the research and innovation community and other relevant stakeholders (e.g. industry, other commercial actors, professional organisations, policy makers) in order to achieve and expand potential impact of the programme. This includes the strategy to be adopted to ensure open access to publications and to research data (when appropriate) as well as promoting FAIR data management ;
  - Intellectual Property Rights issues (if relevant);
  - Any other relevant point.

### **2.4 Quality of the proposed measures to communicate the results to different target audiences**

- Communication and public engagement strategy of the programme; in particular the approach envisaged to create awareness among the general public of the research work performed under the programme and its implications for citizens and society should be described;.
- Any other relevant point.

## **3. Quality and efficiency of the implementation**

### **3.1 Coherence, effectiveness and appropriateness of the work plan**

- Describe the work plan of the programme and the resources; [define the work packages and deliverables](#); include a timeline or Gantt chart giving an overview of at least the:
  - Expected start and end date of the action (number of months);
  - Number of Calls;
  - Opening/Closing date of the call(s);
  - Number of fellowships offered per call;
  - Evaluation timeline;
  - Expected/planned start/end date of researchers' appointments.
- Financial management and risk management/contingency plans of the programme;
- Any other relevant point.

### **3.2 Appointment conditions of researchers**

- Amounts that will be provided for the benefit of the researcher (e.g. living, mobility, travel and family allowances) and for the organisation that is hosting the researcher (contribution to research, training and networking costs, indirect costs) (Table 1);
- Working conditions, institutional administrative support, and available services/facilities;
- Employment conditions, including statutory working practices, social security coverage and social benefits;
- Compare the proposed working conditions through the programme with the regional and/or national and/or sectoral ones;
- Any other relevant point.



### **3.3 Competence of the participant to implement the programme**

- Description of how the administrative, technical and human resources will be used to implement the programme.
- If known, description of [partner organisations](#) hosting and training the researchers and contributing financially to the programme (if applicable);
- Support offered to candidates/researchers during the application/recruitment/implementation;
- Any other relevant point.

**Table 1. The following table (or similar) should be used to detail the financial aspects of the programme. Please note that the amounts for the living allowance and for the mobility allowance must be specified individually:**

<b>Cost categories</b>	<b>EU contribution (EUR/person-month)</b>	<b>Total cost = EU contribution + own resources (EUR/person-month)</b>
Living allowance	1 935 (for <a href="#">ESR</a> )* 2 740 (for <a href="#">ER</a> )*	***
Mobility allowance**	N/A	***
Family allowance**	N/A	
Travel allowance**	N/A	
Research costs**	N/A	
Other (training, etc.)**	N/A	
Management costs	325	
Indirect costs**	N/A	
<b>Number of fellows</b>		
<b>Number of fellow months</b>		
<b>Total amount</b>		

\*Choose the applicable rate, and delete the other.

\*\* If applicable, delete otherwise. Other lines can be included for categories not shown in the template above.

\*\*\* The sum of living and mobility allowances must not be lower than EUR 2709 for [ESR](#) and EUR 3836 for [ER](#).

The following work packages and pre-filled deliverables are mandatory, and constitute a minimum requirement (you may, if necessary, enhance these deliverables by adding additional ones).

<b>Work package number</b>	1	<b>Start date or starting event:</b>	
		<b>Final date:</b>	
Work package title	Management		

Deliverables D 1.1 Progress Report ....
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<b>Work package number</b>	2	<b>Start date or starting event:</b>	
		<b>Final date:</b>	
Work package title	Dissemination of the Programme and its Calls		

Deliverables D 2.1 Report/s on communication and dissemination activities D 2.2 Inform for each call the Project Officer by sending the link to the Euraxess website where the Call has been published ....
--

<b>Work package number</b>	3	<b>Start date or starting event:</b>	
		<b>Final date:</b>	
Work package title	Evaluation and Selection		

Deliverables D 3.1 Report for each call on evaluation and selection ....
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<b>Work package number</b>	4	<b>Start date or starting event:</b>	
		<b>Final date:</b>	
Work package title	Training & Career Development		

Deliverables D 4.1 Report on training & career development after the end of each reporting period ....
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<b>Work package number</b>	5	<b>Start date or starting event:</b>	
		<b>Final date:</b>	
Work package title	Ethics Issues		

Deliverables D5.1 Report for each call on ethics issues ....
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**STOP PAGE COUNT – MAX 30 PAGES**

#### 4. Ethics Aspects

All research activities in Horizon 2020 must respect fundamental ethics principles, including those reflected in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union<sup>27</sup> and the relevant ethics rules of H2020. These principles include the need to ensure the freedom of research and the need to protect the physical and moral integrity of individuals and the welfare of animals.

Ethics is important for all research domains. Informed consent and confidentiality are as important for a sociological study as they are for clinical research.

**In this context, please be aware that it is the applicants' responsibility to identify any potential ethics issues, to handle the ethics aspects of their proposal, and to detail how they plan to address them.**

For COFUND programmes, it is often not known in advance if the fellowships to be funded will raise ethics issues. Therefore, it is important to describe how the proposal meets the European as well as the national legal and ethics requirements of the country or countries where the tasks raising ethics issues are to be carried out. In particular, applicants should take care to describe the ethics procedures that they will enforce in the execution of the programme (at application phase, selection and evaluation phase, monitoring and follow-up of projects, and the trainings on ethics). A report on ethics issues will be produced by the beneficiary for each call it organises.

In practice, this means that the successful COFUND programmes, when opening their calls for proposals, will have to detail the procedure to be followed for addressing proposals raising ethics issues.

#### 5. Letters of Commitment from Partner organisations

Please fill in the overview of all the identified Partner Organisations in **Table 2**.

Please use this section to insert scanned copies of the letters of commitment from the [partner organisations](#).

The [partner organisations](#) identified in the proposal must provide a letter of commitment **on headed institution stationary dated after the call opening and signed by an individual who has the authority to make the commitment on behalf of the partner organisation.**

The letter of commitment **must specify their precise role in the programme and their exact and quantified financial contribution if any.**

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<sup>27</sup> Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, 2000/C 364/01.  
See also [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/default\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/default_en.htm)

**Table 2. The following table should be used to list and detail the role of the partner organisations (if known), including their financial contribution to the programme (when applicable):**

Partner organisation name	Partner organisation short name	Country	Academic (Y/N)	Role			
				Hosting researchers WITH recruiting (Y/N)	Hosting researchers WITHOUT recruiting (Y/N)	Providing other training or career development opportunities (Y/N)	Financial contribution in EUR (if applicable)

**Note that:**

- Any relationship between different participating organisations or individuals (e.g. family ties, shared premises or facilities, joint ownership, financial interest, overlapping staff, etc.) **must** be declared and justified;
- The data provided relating to the financial capacity of the beneficiary will be subject to verification during the grant preparation phase.

**END PAGE**

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PART B

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