

Webinar IF 2020 : Drafting Tips

FAQs from "IF 2020: Writing Tips" webinars conducted on 16 and 25 June 2020 by the French MSCA NCP

General information

Is it mandatory to determine the duration of the fellowship at the time of writing the proposal?

It is mandatory to determine the duration of the fellowship at the time of writing the proposal. Indeed, the duration of the fellowship determines the budget that will be allocated to your project. In addition, you will have to complete your Gantt Chart over the whole duration of the project.

What advice would you address in priority to researchers in literature and SSH (Social sciences and humanities)? Indeed, the criteria are generally formulated in a language quite far from their original academic universe or are not very relevant.

One advice that could be given would be to demonstrate the impact on the research field, the researcher's career and the European society. Furthermore, in order to demonstrate the innovative side of the research, new approaches and originality of methodology should be used.

For information, at the previous call, the SOC Panel was among ones with the highest number of projects funded. Bellow, are the figures for the 2019 call for proposals:

European Fellowships				Global Fellowships			
2019				2019			
Panel	Main List	Highest score	Lowest score	Panel	Main List	Highest score	Lowest score
CHE	139	99,4	92,4	CHE	15	99,4	92
ECO	23	100	91,6	ECO	3	92	89,4
ENG	124	100	92,4	ENG	22	99,2	89,8
ENV	111	100	93,4	ENV	28	99,2	91,6
LIF	231	100	92,6	LIF	36	100	91,2
MAT	23	99,6	91,2	MAT	2	94,8	94,2
PHY	119	100	91,4	PHY	17	96,8	88,4
SOC	227	100	93	SOC	80	100	90
Total	997			Total	203		

✓ *Should the host institution's PIC be used or the one of the applicant's current institution?*

You have to use the host institution's PIC. In the case of a Global Fellowship, the PIC of the institution that will host the fellow during the outgoing phase must also be provided.

✓ *What are the main changes in the IF 2020 call compared to the 2019 call?*

You can find the changes made in the presentation "[Individual Fellowships - 2019 /2020 Changes to the Applicant Guidebook](#)" available in the NCP Toolkit.

✓ *Will the deadline for applications be extended due to the health crisis?*

To date, we have not received any information about this.

✓ *When will the results be known?*

It takes 5 months from the call deadline to the publication of the results. Thus, the results should be known by mid-February 2020.

✓ *Does the 10-page limit include the excellence, impact and implementation sections?*

Yes.

✓ *Is it possible to apply to a host institution if the applicant has lived in the same country as this institution?*

The mobility rule is not the same depending on the type of Individual Fellowship chosen:

- **European Fellowship Standard:** the researcher must not have resided or carried out their main activity in the country of the host institution for more than 12 months in the last three years immediately before the call deadline ;
- **Reintegration Panel, Career Restart Panel and Society and Enterprise panel:** the researcher must not have resided or carried out their main activity in the country of the host institution for more than 36 months in the five years immediately before the call deadline;
- **Global Fellowship:** the researcher must not have resided or carried out their main activity in the country of the Third Country partner organisation where the outgoing phase takes place for more than 12 months in the three years immediately before the call deadline.

Eligibility Eligibilité

✓ *Are non-European applicants penalized?*

Only some fellowships have a nationality criterion:

Type of scholarships	Nationality criterions
EF - Standard (ST)	None
EF - Career Restart Panel (CAR)	None
EF - Reintegration Panel (RI)	National or long-term resident* of a Member State or associated country
EF - Society and Enterprise Panel (SE)	None
Global Fellowship	National or long-term resident* of a Member State or associated country

* Long-term resident: it is a person who has lived for at least 5 consecutive years in a Member State or associated country.

✓ *Can a candidate apply if he/she has not yet defended his/her thesis at the time of the call deadline but who will have it defended at the start of the fellowship? On the same basis, is a candidate eligible if he/she has not yet defended his/her thesis and cannot justify 4 years of research experience?*

To be eligible, the experienced researcher must be in possession of a doctoral degree or have at least four years of full-time equivalent research experience at the call deadline.

✓ *Is it possible to apply in the same year for a Global Fellowship and a European Fellowship?*

No, it is not possible to submit several applications in the same year for the same applicant.

p.6 of the [IF 2020 Guide for Applicants](#): Only one proposal per individual researcher may be submitted to this call.

- ✓ *Is it possible to apply for a European Fellowship if I am a French national, with a PhD obtained in Canada and currently in post-doctoral studies in France?*

As long as the eligibility requirements and the mobility rule are respected, you can apply for a European Fellowship.

- ✓ *If a candidate has already obtained a funding for one year from September 2020 and wishes to extend the stay in the host team, can he/she apply this year for an Individual Fellowship?*

If they meet the eligibility requirements and the mobility rule, they will be able to apply for an Individual Fellowship.

- ✓ *Is it possible for researchers advanced in their research career (e.g. more than 15 years of experience) to apply for an Individual Fellowship?*

Yes, within the framework of Horizon 2020, Individual Fellowships are open to all researchers, regardless of the stage of their career.

- ✓ *How is it possible to prove that the candidate has 4 years of research experience?*

A candidate can prove his or her experience through employment contracts, scholarships or a PhD registration. Publications will support the research experience but cannot constitute a proof of full-time involvement in research activities.

- ✓ *Due to the health pandemic, do you think that the European Commission will be flexible in the mobility rule?*

To date, the European Commission has not made any statement on this subject with regard to the IF projects at proposal stage

- ✓ *Is it allowed to resubmit a proposal?*

As long as the mobility rule and the eligibility conditions are respected, this is possible.

- ✓ *What is the minimum number of partners expected?*

This is a call for single-beneficiary projects; it is therefore not necessary to include partners. This being said, you can do it in order to be hosted in the framework of a secondment for example.

- ✓ *Is there an age limit for submitting an application?*

Within the Horizon 2020 programme, there is no age limit for submitting an application.

Host Institution

- ✓ *If I have already started working in my potential host institution, is it strategic to highlight it?*

Yes, you can indicate that you have already worked with the host institution. This will reassure the evaluator that you have been well integrated. If you are currently working there, it will not be a problem as long as you respect the mobility rule.

- ✓ *Can an application be penalized if the host institution is the same as the one in which the applicant did their thesis?*

No. However, the reasons why the applicant wishes to return to this institution should be indicated.

Scientific positioning

- ✓ *Does the project have to be "high risk, high gain? »*

In the context of Individual Fellowships, this is not necessarily the expected positioning (unlike ERCs). However, an innovative project should be submitted and shouldn't only be a continuation of what the applicant has already done so far. The main objective of the individual fellowship is to support the candidate's career development.

The notion of "risk" in the Individual Fellowships call refers to the potential risks during the implementation phase of the project (both administrative and scientific).

State of the Art

- ✓ *What does the notion of competition refer to?*

This means that you should not ignore other research groups currently working on the topic (if any). You must demonstrate that this is not just one project among many but the one that must be funded because it will allow you to go further than what has been done so far.

- ✓ *What is the optimal number of bibliographical references to be included?*

There is no optimal number, it depends on your project.

Preliminary Data

- ✓ *Does the preliminary data have to be data acquired by the applicant?*

No, it does not have to be self-acquired data.

- ✓ *Is there a recommended amount of preliminary data?*

There is no recommended amount of preliminary data. These data allow you to strengthen the credibility and feasibility of your project. However, be careful not to propose a project based solely on previous data. The project must also be innovative.

Gender

- ✓ *With regard to gender aspects, is it possible to indicate that the project team will be composed of both men and women?*

Yes, but it will be necessary to explain in detail how this balance will be achieved and handled. You should also explain how gender will be addressed in your research, if applicable (consideration of male/female specimens etc.).

- ✓ *If the project addresses the issue of diversity, is it mandatory to address gender issues?*

Yes, it is essential to address gender in your proposal.

Training

- ✓ *Is it necessary to mention the necessary learning of a language? And if so, in which part of the proposal should it be mentioned?*

Yes, this is part of the transferable skills developed by the researcher during the fellowship. This should be mentioned in the Excellence section. It will also have an impact on the candidate's future career as it may offer new career opportunities with the mastery of this new language.

- ✓ *Is it necessary to specify the names of the training courses or is it sufficient to simply indicate the topic?*

It is important to be as precise as possible. This being said, if you do not have the precise name, you can simply indicate the topic.

Transfer of knowledge

- ✓ *Are "training" and "transfer of knowledge" the same thing?*

No, training is one of the means by which knowledge is transferred. However, transfer of knowledge can take place by other means throughout the project.

- ✓ *Which part should be detailed first: the innovative aspect of the research plan or the transfer of knowledge? Which part is more important for the project to be successful?*

Both are to be developed; they are equally important.

Supervisor

- ✓ *Should the secondment supervisor be included in the project monitoring (progress monitoring)?*

Yes, it is essential to include the candidate's supervisor during the secondment period in the project monitoring. In addition, it must be shown how the link with the main supervisor will be maintained and how the second supervisor will be integrated into the project.

- ✓ *Concerning the supervisor's bibliography, is it possible to simply refer to the mentor's personal page?*

It is not possible to refer to the personal page of the supervisor because the expert evaluators are asked to disregard hyperlinks in the document.

p.35 of the [IF 2020 Guide for Applicants](#): Part B of the proposal should not contain any hyperlinks in the core text. Any additional information provided through hyperlinks in the core text will be disregarded.

- ✓ *Is it important to present the publications of the supervisor?*

Yes, without being exhaustive, it is important to mention the publications of the supervisor to demonstrate their expertise.

- ✓ *If the project includes a secondary supervisor, should the expertise and experiences of the "secondary supervisor" be described?*

Yes.

- ✓ *What is the optimal frequency of meetings between the supervisor and the fellow?*

There is no optimal frequency, but these meetings must be consistent with the project.

Applicant

- ✓ *Is the CV evaluated by the expert evaluators? Or is it better to put our most relevant experiences into the project?*

The project is evaluated by the expert evaluators (Part B - Document 2). However, you can also indicate your best achievements in the proposal, if they are relevant to the project, to demonstrate that you are the right researcher to carry out this project.

Impact

- ✓ *With respect to the Impact section, how should this section be written for a basic science project? Is it absolutely necessary to develop an "applied" aspect?*

No, the impact can be found at different levels: on the researcher's career, on the research field, on the scientific community, etc. You must demonstrate that your project has an impact in the sense that it allows you to go beyond the current state of the art and to gain new knowledge and data in the field.

- ✓ *Is it possible to indicate that the project is fully in line with the priorities and directives of the European Union?*

Yes, this is even more than recommended. The expert evaluator should be reminded of the importance of your project because it addresses a challenge, a priority at European or even global level (for example: the Green Deal priorities). You can also refer to the [sustainable development objectives](#) of the United Nations.

Dissemination & communication

- ✓ *What is the number of conference attendance and the number of publications expected from a 2-year project?*

There is no minimum number, it really depends on the project. On the other hand, it is necessary to propose enough publications to disseminate the results of the project while appearing credible.

- ✓ *How can communication activities be planned? Is it expected to identify target audiences? Should the activities be included in the Gantt Chart?*

Be as specific as possible, which implies the identification of target audiences. In addition, these different activities should be described and included in the Gantt Chart.

Secondments & Short visits

- ✓ *In the case of a project in History that requires access to archives in different countries, do research trips outside the country of the host institution seem reasonable?*

It is possible to carry out secondments in other organisations located in a Member State or associated country. The duration of these secondments depends on the duration of your fellowship.

Duration of the grant	Duration of the secondment
≤ 18 months	Maximum 3 months
> 18 months	Maximum 6 months

You can also make short stays in any country of the world, but they should not be a major activity for the project.

p.20 du [IF 2020 Guide for Applicants](#) :

*It is essential for the applicants to clearly **distinguish "secondments" from short visits** (for example for fieldwork) since they have a different nature and pursue different objectives. A short visit is not a "secondment", and therefore the country where a short visit takes place can be chosen freely.*

- *Secondments are planned in advance, and are an integral part of the research proposal.*
- *Secondments imply mobility to a partner organisation in a **MS or AC** with specific supervision arrangements. Short visits imply mobility to another location outside the physical premises of the beneficiary. However, the work done is supervised directly by the beneficiary.*
- *Short visits can only represent a small part of the action.*
- *When a short visit to a TC takes place, the beneficiary shall ensure compliance with the applicable Horizon 2020 ethical framework and the corresponding provisions of the Grant Agreement.*

Any period of secondment(s) not complying with the above criteria will be disregarded by the evaluators.

- ✓ *Can a secondment take place in a research organization?*

Yes, secondments can take place in the academic sector (research organisation, university, etc.) as well as in the non-academic sector (SMEs, associations, museums, etc.).

- ✓ *Is it necessary to have written confirmation from the host institution in case of secondment?*

No, institutions hosting a secondment do not need to provide a letter of commitment. If a secondment is planned but the partner organisation is not yet known, at least the type of organisation must be indicated to justify the importance and coherence of the proposed mobility.

- ✓ *Is it possible to have two secondments of three months in two different institutions or is it preferable to have only one secondment of 6 months?*

It is possible to have two secondments in two different institutions provided that you meet the conditions set out above.

- ✓ *Can the candidate do one secondment in their home country?*

Yes, secondment can take place in the candidate's country of origin, provided that it is a Member State or an associated country.

- ✓ *Is it strategic to include secondment?*

Secondments are not compulsory and should only be included in the project if they are really relevant and bring real added value to the project (new competence, new expertise, use of state-of-the-art technology not available in the beneficiary's country, etc.).

Collaborations

- ✓ *Is it positive or negative if a company contributes to the project or if there is already a collaboration with a company to visit?*

If it is within the project, it is positive. It shows that the candidate will be exposed to the non-academic sector and thus bring new skills but also new career opportunities.

- ✓ *Is it possible to report partnerships that are not secondments or related to the partner organization?*

Yes, in this case, you may indicate that you have collaborations with a particular individual/institution and why these collaborations would be beneficial to the project.

Intellectual Property

- ✓ *In the context of a Global Fellowship, does the knowledge created in the third country also have to be transferred? In addition, how does this apply to patent applications resulting from work within the framework of a Global Fellowship?*

Article 26.1 of the grant agreement stipulates that the results belong to the beneficiary. This means that in general, where the beneficiary is the employer of the laureate, the beneficiary has ownership of the results.

However, in the context of the implementation of Global Fellowship actions, the researcher's host organisation in the outgoing phase may request a sharing of the results. In this situation, the agreement between the beneficiary and the partner organisation must be compatible with all the obligations of the grant agreement.

Work plan

- ✓ *Could you clarify what is meant by person-months by Work Package?*

It is the time spent by the candidate for each task to be carried out.

- ✓ *Do we have to indicate person-months for the candidate only or also for the different people involved in the project (supervisor, etc.)?*

It is mandatory to indicate the distribution of person-months for the candidate. Then, as far as the allocation of tasks and resources is concerned, you will have to specify when the supervisor, a PhD student, an engineer, etc. will be involved in the project.

- ✓ *What do the "non-scientific" Work Packages refer to? Is it not possible to include training, dissemination and communication activities in a transversal way in the scientific Work Packages?*

Non-scientific Work Packages include all training, communication and dissemination activities as well as support (if applicable), etc.

- ✓ *Is it true that the Gantt Chart needs to be streamlined?*

The Gantt Chart must be complete and exhaustive; it is the schematic transcription of the tasks in your project. All tasks, deliverables and milestones should be included.

- ✓ *Apart from publications, what can be called a deliverable?*

It can be a report, a data analysis, an article, a document, a prototype, a software, etc.

- ✓ *Should the activities be described or is it sufficient to simply mention them (examples: seminars, cross-cutting training, workshops)?*

It is imperative to describe each of these activities.

Risk assessment and management

- ✓ *Would it be possible to give some examples of administrative and/or scientific risks?*

Example of administrative risk: the risk of not obtaining the necessary authorisations from the competent authorities in time in a country where the applicant will have to carry out field studies. This could delay the study.

Example of scientific risk: the risk of not obtaining the expected results.

- ✓ *In which section should the risks be presented?*

Risks should be addressed in section "3. Implementation" under the following point "3.2 Appropriateness of the management structure and procedures, including risk management. Describe the organisation and management structure, as well as the progress monitoring mechanisms put in place, to ensure that objectives are reached. Discuss the research and/or administrative risks that might endanger reaching the action objectives and the contingency plans to be put in place should risks occur."

- ✓ *Can the possibility of applying for a complementary source of funding be an adequate response to an identified risk?*

It depends on the risk, but beware of the notion of double funding.

Additional activities to the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Project

- ✓ *Is it possible to maintain a link (mentoring) with students (master's and doctoral students) from another organisation during an Individual Fellowship?*

Be aware, you are supposed to be 100% on your project. If it is a collaboration, in connection with your project it should be possible, but if you want to maintain the link to supervise theses, it will have to remain a minor activity and especially in agreement with the Project Officer.

If it takes too much time on your project, you will have to ask the European Commission if it is possible to switch to part-time work.

Ethics

- ✓ *If our project includes the development of food products for human consumers, does this raise an ethical question?*

Once you include humans in your project, there may be ethical issues to be addressed.

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✓ *In the human and social sciences, when a study includes humans, should it be addressed in the ethical part?*

To find out, refer to the ethical grid. Below is a self-evaluation tool that can help you in the drafting of this section.

https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/ethics/h2020_hi_ethics-self-assess_en.pdf