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# Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions

The pocket guide for researchers,  
universities, research institutes  
and companies

Marie  
Skłodowska-Curie  
Actions



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

**MARIE SKŁODOWSKA-CURIE ACTIONS**

The pocket guide for researchers,  
universities, research institutes  
and companies

2020

Horizon 2020

## MARIE SKŁODOWSKA-CURIE ACTIONS

### The pocket guide for researchers, universities, research institutes and companies

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) are the main European funding programme for doctoral and postdoctoral training, preparing a generation of highly-skilled researchers to contribute to the knowledge-based society. The MSCA do not only support career development opportunities for researchers at all stages of their careers, notably through fellowships, but they also have a pronounced structuring impact on universities and other entities well beyond academia by spreading excellence and setting standards for high-quality researcher education and training worldwide.

They encourage the development of skills for innovation in all scientific disciplines, through worldwide and cross-sector mobility.

The scheme offers high-quality and innovative research training and knowledge sharing opportunities in the academic and non-academic sectors. Universities, research centres, companies including SMEs and other non-academic organisations can host and train researchers at no cost.

“ Nothing in life is to be feared. It is only to be understood. ”

Marie Skłodowska-Curie

A strong emphasis is given to the employability of researchers and the enhancement of transferable skills, entrepreneurship, management and financing of research activities and programmes, management of intellectual property rights, ethical aspects and communication.

The MSCA ensure attractive employment and working conditions for researchers and promote gender balance and equal opportunities.

Funded projects and researchers commit to undertake public outreach activities to bridge the gap between science and society, raising awareness of the impact of publicly-funded research on citizens' daily lives.

This booklet is designed to help you decide which MSCA grant is the right one for yourself or your organisation.

#### WHICH ACTION?

Compare the available research funding opportunities at a glance.

» Page 8

#### NEED TO KNOW

Some useful basics before you dive in.

» Page 10

#### TRAINING FUTURE GENERATIONS OF RESEARCHERS

Interested in setting up a doctoral programme? The MSCA bring together universities and research institutes with non-academic partners to train researchers.

→ Section 1 INNOVATIVE TRAINING NETWORKS » Page 13

## KNOWLEDGE SHARING ACROSS SECTORS AND BORDERS

Are you looking for sharing knowledge and international collaboration opportunities? Find out how the MSCA support collaborative projects for short-term exchanges of research and innovation staff.

→ [Section 2 RESEARCH AND INNOVATION STAFF EXCHANGE](#)

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## GOING FURTHER IN YOUR RESEARCH CAREER

Are you an experienced researcher looking to undertake research in or outside Europe? The MSCA can support the next step in your international career by offering you the possibility to get a postdoctoral fellowship.

→ [Section 3 INDIVIDUAL FELLOWSHIPS](#) » [Page 23](#)

## BROADENING HORIZONS

Does your organisation fund or manage a doctoral or fellowship programme for researchers? Boost its international dimension and spread the best practices of the MSCA with additional funding.

→ [Section 4 CO-FUNDING OF REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMMES](#) » [Page 27](#)

## RESEARCH CLOSE TO PEOPLE

Interested in sharing your research with a wider public? Engage and interact with people at public events across Europe.

→ [Section 5 EUROPEAN RESEARCHERS' NIGHT](#)

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	CONSORTIUM APPLIES		INDIVIDUALS APPLY WITH HOST	FUNDER APPLIES
	<b>ITN</b> Innovative Training Networks	<b>RISE</b> Research and Innovation Staff Exchange	<b>IF</b> Individual Fellowships	<b>COFUND</b> Co-funding of regional, national and international doctoral and fellowship programmes
<b>Aims</b>	Promote innovative research and excellent doctoral programmes in Europe and beyond. Develop researchers' skills for innovation within and outside academia.	Stimulate interaction between academia and non-academia, in different countries and sectors. Enhance the international dimension of research and innovation.	Enable experienced researchers to do a postdoc to work on projects in Europe and worldwide, acquire new skills and improve their career prospects.	Support regional, national or international programmes to foster excellence in doctoral training and fellowship programmes, spreading the best practices of the MSCA.
<b>Profile of the researchers</b>	Early-stage researchers of any nationality, usually prospective PhD candidates.	Research and innovation staff and researchers of the participating organisations, of any nationality.	Experienced researchers of any nationality, usually PhD holders.	Early-stage and experienced researchers of any nationality.
<b>Profile of the hosts</b>	Universities, research centres, companies including SMEs, non-academic organisations.		Universities, research centres, companies including SMEs, non-academic organisations.	
<b>How does it work?</b>	Successful proposals from a consortium receive funding to recruit researchers for up to 3 years, and to cover the costs of research, training and networking activities, as well as management and indirect costs.	Successful proposals from a consortium receive funding for staff exchanges of 1 to 12 months, and to cover the costs of research, training and networking activities, as well as management and indirect costs.	Successful proposals submitted by a researcher with host organisation receive funding for 2 to 3 years, including living and mobility allowances, costs of research, training and networking activities, as well as management and indirect costs (for hosts).	Successful proposals from organisations that fund or manage a doctoral or a fellowship programme receive a fixed amount for each supported researcher as a contribution to the total costs needed to cover their living allowances and management costs.
<b>Next calls (indicative)</b>	No more calls foreseen under Horizon 2020.	Open: 05/12/2019 Close: 28/04/2020	Open: 08/04/2020 Close: 09/09/2020	Open: 08/04/2020 Close: 29/09/2020

## MARIE SKŁODOWSKA-CURIE ACTIONS NEED TO KNOW

### Rights of the fellows

The MSCA provide a set of rights to researchers employed by the MSCA beneficiaries. They must receive at least a minimum level of allowances. To know more about them, you can consult the Work Programme at the Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal:

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

The EU's policy to make research an attractive career builds on two key documents: the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for Recruitment.

Downloadable versions are available at:

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

### Success stories

Outstanding Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellows working within the best research groups and companies around the world contribute to successful projects with a strong impact on science, society and economy.

[https://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions/funded-projects\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions/funded-projects_en)  
[https://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions/resources/success-stories\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions/resources/success-stories_en)

### MSCA National Contact Points

The MSCA National Contact Point of your country of residence or destination provides assistance and information about the MSCA.

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

## Research Executive Agency (REA)

The REA is the executive agency of the European Commission in charge of implementing the MSCA. Over the course of your work in a project, REA will be your main contact point.

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/research-executive-agency\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/research-executive-agency_en)

### Definitions

**Academic sector:** public or private higher education establishments awarding academic degrees (usually universities) or research organisations for whom one of the main objectives is to pursue research or technological development, international European interest organisations.

**Non-academic sector:** any socio-economic actor not included in the academic sector, from industry to business, governments, civil society organisations, cultural institutions, hospitals, etc.

**Associated Countries:** countries associated to Horizon 2020. Organisations of these countries can participate in the same conditions as those of the European Union.

[https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants\\_manual/hi/3cp/h2020-hi-list-ac\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/3cp/h2020-hi-list-ac_en.pdf)

**Third Countries:** countries that are neither EU Member States nor associated to Horizon 2020. Organisations from some third countries can receive funding through Horizon 2020 grants.

[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)

**Early-stage researchers:** researchers with less than 4 years of research experience (full-time equivalent) and who have been not awarded a doctoral degree, usually prospective PhD candidates.

**Experienced researchers:** PhD holders or researchers having at least 4 years of research experience (full-time equivalent).

**Staff members:** early-stage and experienced researchers or administrative, managerial and technical staff supporting the research and innovation activities of an MSCA project.

**Mobility rules:** MSCA researchers are subject to specific mobility rules that vary from one MSCA action to another. To know more about them, you can consult the Work Programme and the Guides for Applicants at the Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal:

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

## » SECTION 1

# TRAINING FUTURE GENERATIONS OF RESEARCHERS

INNOVATIVE TRAINING NETWORKS (ITN)



# INNOVATIVE TRAINING NETWORKS

Looking for high quality doctoral training that combines scientific excellence with innovation skills to enhance your career prospects?

Innovative Training Networks (ITN) aim to develop excellent doctoral programmes to train a new generation of creative, entrepreneurial and innovative early-stage researchers.

These high-quality programmes are delivered by international networks that bring together universities, but also research centres and non-academic organisations (companies, NGOs, charities, etc.) across Europe and beyond. They benefit from collaborating on innovative doctorates, with access to the best researchers and cutting-edge technologies.

ITNs can take **one of the following three forms:**

- » **European Training Networks (ETN):** A minimum of three academic and non-academic organisations from at least three different EU or Horizon 2020 Associated Countries form a consortium to deliver a joint doctoral programme or research training. The aim is for the researchers to experience different sectors and develop their transferable skills by working on joint research projects. Additional organisations from any sector anywhere in the world can also join a consortium.
- » **European Industrial Doctorates (EID):** A minimum of one academic organisation and one non-academic organisation (usually an enterprise) from at least two different EU or Horizon 2020 Associated Countries form a consortium to deliver an inter-sectoral doctoral programme or research training. They are required to supervise researchers jointly and to set up a joint governance structure. Researchers are enrolled in a doctoral programme and are required to spend at least half of their time in the non-academic sector. The aim is for researchers to develop skills inside and outside academia that respond to public and private sector needs. Additional organisations from any sector anywhere in the world can also join a consortium.



» **European Joint Doctorates (EJD):** A minimum of three academic organisations from at least three different EU or Horizon 2020 Associated Countries form a consortium to offer a joint doctoral programme leading to the delivery of a joint, double or multiple doctoral degree. They are required to supervise doctoral candidates jointly and to set up a joint governance structure. The aim is to promote international, inter-sectoral and multi/interdisciplinary collaboration in doctoral training in Europe. Additional organisations from any sector anywhere in the world can also join a consortium.

**ITNs offer substantial training modules in key transferable skills common to all fields**, such as entrepreneurship, general and finance management of research activities, management of intellectual property rights, ethical aspects and communication to **prepare researchers for current and future societal challenges.**

## Who can apply and how?

A group of organisations forms a consortium. The lead **host organisation** (coordinator) submits a proposal on its behalf in reply to a **call for proposals**. All open calls and related information can be found on the **Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal**:

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

**Individuals** of any nationality then apply for the specific doctoral positions created by these consortia, using e.g. the Euraxess website:

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

## Which topics can be funded?

**Any research field** may qualify for ITN funding, apart from research areas covered by the EURATOM Treaty<sup>1</sup>.

1. *These fields of research concerning nuclear energy are referred to in article 4 and Annex I of the Euratom Treaty:*

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2010:084:0001:0112:EN:PDF>

## What does the funding cover?

Grants cover:

- » **Recruitment and mobility** of each researcher for up to **three years** and 100% of costs.

Researchers are hired under an employment contract (unless this is not possible under national law), enjoy full social security coverage and might receive family allowances.

- » **Research costs, training costs and networking** such as participation in conferences, seminars, lab material, publication costs, etc.
- » **Management and indirect costs.**

Successful proposals are usually funded for **four years**.

## Who decides?

All ITN projects are selected through **open competition** by **independent experts** using a series of **pre-determined evaluation criteria**.

## KNOWLEDGE SHARING ACROSS SECTORS AND BORDERS

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION  
STAFF EXCHANGE  
(RISE)



# Research and Innovation Staff Exchange

Collaborative interaction between academic and non-academic sectors can be a powerful catalyst for innovation. The Research and Innovation Staff Exchange (RISE) enables this interaction via staff exchanges between the two sectors worldwide.

These exchanges help research staff to develop careers that combine scientific excellence with exposure to international and/or inter-sectoral settings, contributing to the knowledge economy in Europe and beyond.

## Who can apply and how?

Both **academic and non-academic organisations** are eligible. In particular, the participation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is encouraged.

A RISE consortium is composed of at least three organisations established in three different countries and must respect one of the following two conditions:

- » At least two organisations are located in two different EU or Horizon 2020 Associated Countries and one organisation is located in a Third Country or,
- » If all organisations are from EU or Horizon 2020 Associated Countries, at least one should be from the academic sector and one from the non-academic sector.

Above these minimum requirements, any organisation established in the EU or Horizon 2020 Associated Countries and/or in Third Countries can participate.

The consortium proposes a joint research and innovation project. The lead **host organisation** (coordinator) submits a proposal on its behalf in reply to a call for proposals. Proposals should highlight **networking opportunities, sharing of knowledge** and the **skills development** of staff members. You can find all open calls and related information on the **Funding & tender opportunities Portal**:

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

Staff members of **any nationality** and **any career level** can undertake a secondment. An eligible staff member must be actively engaged in or linked to research and/or innovation activities for at least one month (full-time equivalent) at the sending institution prior to the first period of secondment. All secondments are subject to specific requirements depending on the country and sector of the home and host organisations.

### Which topics can be funded?

Any **research field** may qualify for **RISE** funding, apart from research areas covered by the EURATOM Treaty<sup>2</sup>.

### What does the funding cover?

The grant offers appropriate funding for secondments of staff members for **one month to one year** (with possibility to split into several stays) as well as funding to support research, training and networking activity, and management and indirect costs. Successful proposals are funded for up to **four years**.

### Who decides?

All **RISE** projects are selected through **open competition** by **independent experts** using a series of **pre-determined evaluation criteria**.

2. These fields of research concerning nuclear energy are referred to in article 4 and Annex I of the Euratom Treaty:

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2010:084:0001:0112:EN:PDF>

# GOING FURTHER IN YOUR RESEARCH CAREER

INDIVIDUAL FELLOWSHIPS (IF)



# Individual Fellowships

Are you a talented researcher planning your next career move? Undertaking research in another country is an invaluable way to gain new knowledge and skills, expand your network and advance your career.

*Individual Fellowships support the mobility of experienced researchers in Europe and beyond.*



There are **two types** of Individual Fellowships:

## European Fellowships

- » Held in EU Member States or Horizon 2020 Associated Countries
- » Open to researchers either coming to Europe or moving within Europe
- » Can help you restart your research career after a break such as parental leave
- » Can also help your reintegration if you are coming back to Europe
- » Researcher funding is for one to two years in most cases, up to three years for career reintegration

## Global Fellowships

- » Held both in and outside Europe for researchers based in the EU or Horizon 2020 Associated Countries
- » Researcher funding is for two to three years: one to two years for mobility outside Europe and an additional mandatory one-year return period to EU or Horizon 2020 Associated Countries

European and Global Fellowships can also include a **secondment period** of up to three or six months in another organisation(s) in the EU or Horizon 2020 Associated Countries, where this would boost the impact of the fellowship.

## Who can apply and how?

The **best, most promising individual researchers** from anywhere in the world are encouraged to apply. Fellowships are for **experienced researchers**. See definition above.

To apply you must submit a **research and training proposal**,

including your CV, in response to the call for proposals. The proposal is written jointly with your chosen host organisation(s) (usually a university, but it can also be a research centre or a company). All open calls and related information can be found on the **Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal**:

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

### Which topics can be funded?

Any research field may qualify for IF funding, apart from research areas covered by the EURATOM Treaty<sup>2</sup>.

### What does the funding cover?

The grant is awarded to your host organisation(s) in Europe, which will recruit you and appoint your supervisor(s). The grant provides an allowance to cover your living, mobility and, if applicable, family costs. Research, training and networking costs as well as the management and indirect costs of the host organisation(s) are also supported.

### Who decides?

All IF projects are selected through open competition by independent experts using a series of pre-determined evaluation criteria. Your proposal will be evaluated on its research quality, your future career prospects, and the career development support offered by your host organisation(s).

2. These fields of research concerning nuclear energy are referred to in Article 4 and Annex I of the Euratom Treaty.

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2010:084:0001:0112:EN:PDF>

# BROADENING HORIZONS

CO-FUNDING OF REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL DOCTORAL AND INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMMES (COFUND)



# Co-Funding of regional, national and international programmes

COFUND offers additional funding for new or existing regional, national and international doctoral and fellowship programmes to foster excellence in research training and career development. This extra funding enables to fund more researchers and doctoral programmes across borders and research sectors, spreading the best practices of the MSCA.

## Who can apply and how?

Applicants for COFUND should be **organisations that fund or manage doctoral programmes or fellowship programmes for researchers**. A **sole applicant** established in an EU or Horizon 2020 Associated Country (e.g. a government ministry, regional authority, funding agency, university, research organisation, research academy or enterprise) submits a proposal in reply to a call for proposals. Additional organisations implementing doctoral or fellowship programmes, providing training or hosting researchers can participate as partners.

All open calls and related information can be found on the **Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal**:

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

**Individuals** can find open calls and vacancies for doctoral and fellowship positions of co-funded programmes on the **Euraxess website**:

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

## Which topics can be funded?

**Any research field** may qualify for COFUND funding, apart from research areas covered by the **EURATOM Treaty**<sup>4</sup>.

COFUND programmes can cover several or all research fields or can be restricted to a specific domain. Programmes that prioritise specific research disciplines based on Smart Specialisation Strategies for regional investment will also be supported. For

more information about Smart Specialisation Strategies, visit:

[https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/informat/2014/smart\\_specialisation\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/informat/2014/smart_specialisation_en.pdf)

<https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/research-topic/smart-specialisation>

### What does the funding cover?

Participating organisations receive a **fixed amount for each supported researcher** as contribution to the researcher's remuneration and to the management of the programme. **They must complement these contributions with their own sources** (other than EU funding) to achieve the minimum living allowances to be paid to each researcher as established in the Work Programme.

Individuals - **both early-stage and experienced researchers** - are supported in their research training and career development through the co-funding. **Movement across borders** is a must. **Cross-sectoral mobility** is also encouraged. Selected doctoral and fellowship programmes will be co-funded for **three to five years**.

### Who decides?

All COFUND programmes are selected through **open competition by independent experts** using a series of **pre-determined evaluation criteria**.

4. *These fields of research concerning nuclear energy are referred to in Article 4 and Annex I of the Euratom Treaty.*

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2010:084:0001:0112:EN:PDF>

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions in brief

## RESEARCH CLOSE TO PEOPLE

European Researchers' Night  
(NIGHT)





# European Researchers' Night

European Researchers' Nights are public events that bring researchers closer to the general public, showcase the diversity of science and its impact on our daily lives and encourage young people to embark on scientific careers.

The events present what researchers do for society in interactive and engaging ways.

Since its beginning in 2005 when the NIGHT was launched in 20 cities in 15 countries, it has dramatically grown in size and importance. In its 2019 edition, this annual research outreach initiative supported more than 400 events involving almost 1.6 million visitors. The NIGHT is organised on the last Friday of September each year<sup>5</sup>.

5. Except in Israel, where the event takes place in a close date.

## Who can apply and how?

European Researchers' Night grants may be awarded to **any organisation** or consortium of organisations established in an EU or **Horizon 2020 Associated Country**. Organisations from Third Countries cannot receive funding under this action. Possible organisations could be **private and public research organisations, companies, public authorities, schools, science museums, parent-teacher organisations, foundations, the media, etc.** Participation in the NIGHT usually involves coordinating local, regional, national or international partners.

An organisation (a single applicant or a coordinator on behalf of a consortium) submits a proposal in reply to a call for proposals. All open calls and related information can be found on the Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal:

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

## What can be funded?

Any action or event that boosts **public awareness of the positive role of research in society**, especially among **young people**, is eligible for funding, for instance:

- » **Hands-on experiments** conducted by researchers
- » **Science shows** with public participation
- » **Debates**
- » **“Researchers' speed dating”** (meet researchers and ask them question)
- » **Competitions** (such as science quizzes, games, puzzles,

photo and art contests, etc.)

- » **Workshops** for children
- » **Science slams**
- » **Guided visits** of labs, research institutes, and other relevant places that are usually closed to the public
- » Etc.

### What does the funding cover?

You may use the funding to cover **any expenses linked to the organisation of a research outreach event**, such as awareness campaigns, the activities during the NIGHT and related preparatory activities, and the management of the project.

Successful proposals receive funding for **up to two editions of the NIGHT**. Their value varies in line with the scale of the events proposed.

### Who decides?

All **NIGHT** projects are selected through **open competition by independent experts** using a series of **pre-determined evaluation criteria**.

## Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions

Research training and career development; international and intersectoral mobility; partnerships between academic and non-academic organisations; doctoral programmes; staff exchanges; outreach activities. The EU's Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions fund a wide range of opportunities for researchers.

So which is the right Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action for you? This starter booklet gives you just enough information to make the right choice.



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