



Information package for Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellows¹

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1. Introduction

Congratulations on becoming a Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellow! By joining the community of Europe's mobile researchers, you are about to take your career to the next level.

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions (MSCA) are dedicated to improving the career prospects of researchers in Europe. The MSCA (formerly "Marie Curie Actions") were established in 1996 to support the mobility of researchers. Constantly expanded ever since, the MSCA are now split into four main "actions":

1. Innovative Training Networks (ITN)
2. Individual Fellowships (IF)
3. Research and Innovation Staff Exchange (RISE)
4. Co-funding of regional, national and international programmes (COFUND)

Funding for the MSCA is provided by the European Union (EU) as part of the Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. During the period 2014-2020, the MSCA will have an allocated budget of around EUR 6.2bn, and expect to support some 65 000 researchers, including 25 000 doctoral candidates.

As a Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellow, you have rights and obligations that mostly concern employment conditions, integrity and excellence. The following information provides an overview of these, as well as further resources available online. This document explains key aspects of:

- **Career development** activities in addition to your research
- **Responsible research and innovation** principles and European standards in research
- **Publication and outreach activities** and the principles of **open access**
- **National Contact Points** as well as other useful sources and services

To fully understand your position, you should familiarise yourself with the parts of the Horizon 2020 Work Programme that pertain to the MSCA, as well as the specifics of the grant agreement between the European Commission and your host institution. You should receive a copy of the specific grant

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agreement of your project, together with its annexes, from the project coordinator or from your host beneficiary. This document outlines the scope and nature of the research that will be undertaken and the training that will be provided. The beneficiaries are contractually obliged to implement the project as described in the document. Each grant agreement consists of a "general grant agreement" that is essentially the same for all projects, and Annexes – Part A and Part B – which are specific to the project in question.

On the [Horizon 2020 Participant Portal](#) you will be able to access the Work Programme (ensure that you check the version under which the grant for your project was awarded), the model grant agreement, the annotated model grant agreement that explains how each article is implemented, and other useful documentation.

2. Your rights

Your employer is expected to support you and manage the MSCA grant in accordance with the provisions of [the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers](#). These documents are addressed to researchers as well as to employers and funders in both the public and private sectors. They are key elements of European Union policy to make research an attractive career, by establishing some core rights and obligations.

The European Charter for Researchers should be your first reference to address issues relating to research freedom, ethical principles, professional attitude, accountability, and relations with your supervisor. The Charter also provides standards and guidance on non-discrimination, gender balance, and working conditions, as well as on intellectual property rights and other topics. The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers on the other hand deals with matters of recruitment and selection, such as transparency or proper recognition of qualifications and mobility experience.

For your employer, the grant agreement that it has signed with the European Commission contains the obligation not only to take all measures to implement the principles laid out in the Charter and the Code of Conduct, but also to inform you about them. The employer is required to make its best effort to apply all of the principles set out in the Charter and the Code of Conduct. Some of these principles are also contractually binding, such as the obligation to ensure that you are adequately supervised.

3. Your obligations

Your status as an MSCA fellow also carries certain obligations, for example:

- Working exclusively for the action and receiving income for the activities of the fellowship only from your host organisation, or another entity participating in the action
- Ensuring visibility and recognition of received EU funding in communications, publications and patent applications²
- Informing the host organisation as soon as possible of any events, circumstances or changes in status that are likely to affect your fellowship

² For all communication relating to the project, including publications and presentations, you are requested to ensure the visibility of the EU emblem, and to acknowledge EU funding, including the following text:

“This project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. [number].”

For infrastructure, equipment and major results: “This [infrastructure][equipment][insert type of result] is part of a project that has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No [number].”

- Submitting an evaluation questionnaire and a follow-up questionnaire, at the end of your fellowship and two years afterwards

4. Non-research activities

In line with the European Charter for Researchers, the MSCA put special emphasis on skills development and improving the career prospects of researchers.

Therefore you may undertake professional training and personal development activities during your fellowship, such as:

- **Complementary training** in transferable skills such as proposal writing, patent submission, research management, or entrepreneurship
- **Attendance at conferences and workshops** to boost your competences and networking capacity
- **Outreach** activities to the public
- **Teaching** of students
- Learning a **foreign language**

Non-research activities are complementary and should not interfere with the research element of the project.

You may also join the [Marie Curie Alumni Association](#) (MCAA) to connect with other fellows, whether your participation in an M(S)CA project was for 3 months, 36 months, or any other period. This association, established as a not-for-profit organisation in 2014, offers opportunities for networking and peer exchange, an alumni directory, job offers, an events calendar, and other services of potential interest to M(S)CA fellows. The MCAA is free to join and is open to all M(S)CA-supported researchers, past or present.

5. Career guidance and supervision

Quality supervision and support from your host organisation are among the most important aspects of your fellowship and your critical rights as an MSCA fellow. Your supervisor(s) should be explicitly named in your contract. In addition, the grant agreement of your employer with the Commission contains the details of the supervision arrangements that were included in the proposal. Where supervision will also be provided by another institution, this should be clearly specified in the grant agreement.

Excellent supervision includes keeping records of progress and research findings together with regular feedback including written reports, as well as working in accordance with agreed schedules and milestones. If you feel that there is insufficient expertise or commitment to guide and support you in your research, you should not hesitate to voice these concerns clearly and in time to your employer (for example to your supervisor), or possibly to a National Contact Point (see below).

If those mentioned above cannot resolve the issue, please then contact the organisation coordinating the project, if this is different to your employer. Only in the exceptional cases where problems remain after this dialogue should you inform the relevant Project Officer at the Research Executive Agency (REA) of the European Commission. The coordinator of your project will have the contact details of this person. However, please raise the matter first with your employer or project coordinator (if applicable), before contacting the REA.

6. Responsible research, outreach and open access

As an MSCA fellow, you should remain aware of the most important principles of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI), to steer research and innovation towards addressing key societal challenges and meeting the expectations of European citizens. There are six keys to RRI: **Engagement** of all societal actors (researchers, industry, policy-makers and the civil society), **Gender Equality** in human resources management and in R&I content, quality **Science Education** for the next generation of researchers, **Open Access** to research results of publicly-funded projects, **Ethics** as a basis for increased social relevance and acceptability of research, and **Governance** – actions to mainstream RRI principles within organisations.

In the context of RRI and good research practice in general, **openness and transparency** are paramount. In order to benefit the society at large, the products of your work will need to be disseminated and exploited through communication and publishing, as well as possibly transferred into other research settings. You might be expected to take part in your host's communication plan to ensure a high visibility of the funded research and to help maximise the impact of the results.

The RRI principles are also present in the definition of Horizon 2020 goals and criteria. The MSCA explicitly support **open access** to research results. This means that the peer-reviewed scientific publications resulting from MSCA funding will have to be deposited in repositories and available online free of charge. You can find out more about Horizon 2020 and open access by following the links in the "Online resources" section below.

Gender is also a cross-cutting issue within Horizon 2020, meaning that all funded researchers should reflect on how their own research may be significant for questions such as gender equality, group-based discrimination, etc. One of the goals is to raise awareness of these issues among researchers, especially in cases when their projects are not centred on a gender-related problem, but might indirectly touch on one or more such issues.

MSCA beneficiaries are required to take all measures to promote equal opportunities between men and women in the implementation of the project, including in the recruitment procedure. They must aim, to the extent possible, for a gender balance at all levels of personnel assigned to the project, including at supervisory and managerial level.

As a successful researcher you should also be ready to take part in **promoting research** as a career choice, especially to the young. Engagement with the general public helps to promote the understanding of science and is also a way for you to better understand public expectations and concerns about science and technology.

7. National Contact Points and other assistance and information services

In case you need further clarification with regard to any of the aspects of your fellowship, you could either contact your supervisor or another representative of your employer, or any of the MSCA [National Contact Points \(NCP\)](#). NCPs are national structures which are able to provide personalised support in the local language. Often, a specialised Contact Point with a long-standing experience will deal with the MSCA. NCPs in different countries are in regular touch with each other, so you will be signposted to the most appropriate source of advice.

In addition, **the European [Intellectual Property Rights Helpdesk](#)** offers free-of-charge support on Intellectual Property matters to beneficiaries of EU-funded research projects.

For general questions about Horizon 2020, contact the [Horizon 2020 Helpdesk](#) that will make sure that your question is addressed by the appropriate European Commission service.

Finally, the [EURAXESS – Researchers in Motion portal](#) offers access to personalised help with relocation for internationally mobile researchers, through a network of EURAXESS Service Centres located across Europe. The portal also includes a range of other services, such as information and networking for researchers working outside Europe. The portal is periodically updated to include new features, so please visit it regularly.

Online resources

Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions website

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

Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/Marie.Curie.Actions>

Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions on Twitter

<https://twitter.com/MSCActions>

Marie Curie Alumni Association

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

Horizon 2020 website

<http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020>

Horizon 2020 Participant Portal

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/>

- National Contact Points
http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/support/national_contact_points.html
 - MSCA part of the Work Programme: see “Work Programmes” section and “Main WP” subsection under the following link:
http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/funding/reference_docs.html
 - Annotated Model Grant Agreement:
http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/amga/h2020-amga_en.pdf
 - Horizon 2020 Online Manual
<http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/funding/guide.html>
 - Guidelines on Open Access in Horizon 2020
http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/oa_pilot/h2020-hi-oa-pilot-guide_en.pdf
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EURAXESS portal

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

- European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers
<http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index.cfm/rights/whatIsAResearcher>
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Horizon 2020 Helpdesk

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/index.cfm?pg=enquiries>

The European Intellectual Property Rights Helpdesk

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

Glossary

- **Action:** For the purposes of Horizon 2020, each specific grant receiving funding is referred to as an "action". To avoid confusion with the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions, the present document instead refers to projects.
- **Annex 1:** This refers to the annex to the grant agreement signed between the beneficiaries and the REA. This annex comprises the substantive elements of what the consortium has agreed to do, for example the training to be offered, the individual projects that will take place, etc. This document is therefore also referred to as the "Description of Work" or "Description of Action".
- **REA:** Although the funding for the MSCA is provided by the European Commission, implementation of these programmes is delegated to an executive agency, the Research Executive Agency (REA). Also situated in Brussels, the REA is responsible for the reception and evaluation of proposals, as well as the management of funded actions, across numerous parts of the Horizon 2020 programme, including the MSCA. The Project Officer allocated to your project will therefore be a staff member of the REA. Although formally a part of the Commission, the REA operates autonomously from it, with the Commission exercising oversight and accountability functions.