

Departmental criteria for MSCA Doctoral Network (MSCA-DN) projects

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Background:

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Doctoral Network (MSCA-DN) programme under Horizon Europe is a highly regarded initiative that strengthens international collaboration and doctoral training. Participation in an MSCA-DN can be of great strategic value to the department and to TU Delft. In the Netherlands, PhD projects have a standard duration of four years, while MSCA-DN funding usually covers three years.

Departmental criteria

The department of Hydraulic Engineering supports participation in MSCA-DN projects when the following criteria are met:

- The project complies with requirements set out in the HE Project Guidelines.
- For standard MSCA-DN projects (three-year funding), the full four-year PhD funding must be secured before proposal submission and before recruitment.
- The department accepts that this coverage does not have to come from a single source. Possible solutions include:
 - MSCA-DN Joint Doctorate (JD): this variant is fully funded for four years by the EU. TU Delft allows a joint doctorate degrees with partner universities within the IDEA League.
 - Combining the MSCA-DN with another project that provides complementary funding.
 - Covering the remaining period with recently acquired income from small (e.g. consultancy) projects, provided this funding becomes available around the time the MSCA-DN project starts.
- In principle, the complete budget must be secured and documented at the time of submission.

Exceptional circumstances

The department recognises that in rare cases, opportunities may arise where full four-year funding cannot yet be confirmed at the time of submission. In exceptional situations, researchers may request approval from the HE MT to proceed with submission, provided there is a clear and credible plan to secure the missing funding. Researchers should be aware, however, that if the proposal is awarded, the four-year funding must be guaranteed before signing the consortium agreement. Choosing this route means accepting personal and reputational risk if the funding cannot ultimately be arranged and you need to withdraw from the project.