



EN

Horizon Europe

Work Programme 2023-2024

2. Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions

(European Commission Decision C(2022)7550 of 6 December 2022)



Introduction

The European Union needs a strong, resilient, flexible and creative human resource base, with the right combination of skills to match the future needs of the labour market, to innovate and to convert knowledge and ideas into products and services for economic and social benefit. The Covid-19 crisis has highlighted once more the importance of the Union's reliance on a **highly skilled research-based human capital** that is able to detect and tackle upcoming challenges, to communicate scientific evidence to policy-makers and the public at large, and to work across disciplines.

In this context, the Union must reinforce its efforts to encourage more young women and men to make a career in research, promote its attractiveness for top talents from around the world, retain its own researchers and reintegrate those working elsewhere. The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) are the main instrument at Union-level to do so. Since their launch in 1996, they have become the **Union's reference programme for doctoral education and postdoctoral training**. Between 2014 and 2020, in the context of Horizon 2020, the MSCA have supported 65 000 researchers in Europe and beyond, both doctoral candidates and more experienced researchers, and have funded over **1 000 excellent international doctoral networks**.

The MSCA strongly contribute to excellent research, boosting jobs, growth and investment by equipping researchers with **new knowledge and skills** and providing them with **an international as well as inter-sectoral exposure** (including through academia-business collaboration), to fill the top positions of tomorrow.

The MSCA do not only have a positive impact on individual researchers, they also contribute to the development of **excellent doctoral programmes, postdoctoral training programmes and collaborative research projects**. They have a **structuring impact** on higher education institutions and other entities way beyond academia by widely spreading excellence and setting standards for high-quality researcher education and training, not only across the European Research Area (ERA), but also worldwide. Positive structuring effects on organisations include:

- increasing the quality of researchers' training and supervision offered;
- strengthening research capacity (e.g. ability to attract funding);
- improving human resources practices and procedures, and providing fairer and more attractive working conditions for researchers, including through career guidance and development;
- building new and sustainable international and inter-sectoral partnerships and networks; better transfer of knowledge between sectors and disciplines, enhancing their global reputation and visibility.

Main principles applying to the MSCA

Excellence

The MSCA focus on **excellence** in various aspects: excellence does not only apply to the individual fellows supported or the collaborations fostered and knowledge transferred, but also to the R&I methodologies applied, the research conducted as well as the training, supervision and career guidance provided. Long-term investment in people pays off, as indicated *inter alia* by the number of Nobel Prize winners who have been either former MSCA fellows or supervisors.

Mobility

The MSCA are based on the principle of **physical mobility**: researchers who receive funding have to move from one country to another to acquire new knowledge, skills and competences, and develop their research career. Researchers are also strongly encouraged to move between sectors and disciplines.

While **virtual mobility** does not have the same multifaceted impact on the development of individuals and sustainable cooperation among organisations as physical mobility, it can however complement it, facilitate long-distance collaboration and be an effective means to faster achieving research and training objectives. In this regard, all MSCA proposals are encouraged to explore opportunities offered by e-infrastructures and related services, in particular those provided through GEANT¹, the pan-European research and education network.

Bottom-up and open to the world

The MSCA are **open to all domains** of research and innovation, chosen freely by the applicants in a fully bottom-up manner, addressed under the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. In addition, Postdoctoral Fellowships can also address domains covered by the Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom Research and Training Programme 2021-2025). All MSCA will complement top-down collaborative research activities, notably contributing to the EU Missions.

The MSCA have also a **strong international dimension**: international cooperation is particularly encouraged as it allows institutions to set-up strategic collaborations worldwide, attracts foreign talents to Europe and provides European researchers with access to unique expertise, facilities, testing environments or data available only outside Europe.

Recruitment, working/employment conditions and inclusiveness

The principles of the **European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers** ([Charter and Code](#)) promoting open, merit-based and transparent recruitment and attractive working and employment conditions are a cornerstone

¹ <http://www.geant.org>

of the MSCA and all funded host organisations must put effort into applying them. The MSCA pay particular attention to **equal opportunities and inclusiveness**. In line with the Charter and Code, all MSCA-funded projects are encouraged to embrace diversity and take measures to facilitate mobility and counter-act gender and disability-related barriers to it.

MSCA projects are also encouraged to facilitate access by **researchers at risk**², through tailored support and career services, including job search assistance in the researcher's new geographical area.

Supervision

The MSCA promote effective supervision, which contribute to creating a supportive environment for the researchers to conduct their work. In line with the principles set out in the Charter and Code, MSCA beneficiaries must ensure **adequately supervision or mentoring and appropriate career guidance**. Supervision is one of the crucial elements of successful research. Guiding, supporting, directing, advising and mentoring are key factors for a researcher to pursue his/her career path. In this context, all MSCA-funded projects are encouraged to follow the recommendations outlined in the **Guidelines for MSCA supervision**³.

Open Science and Responsible Research and Innovation

The MSCA endorse **Open Science and Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI)** through engaging society at large, integrating the gender and ethical dimensions, promoting Open Science practices through targeted training activities, ensuring open access to research outcomes, including FAIR⁴ data handling, encouraging formal and informal science education and feeding back research results into teaching and education.

European Green Deal

The MSCA support **bottom-up and frontier/applied research** contributing directly to the European Commission's commitment to tackling climate and environmental-related challenges. Under Horizon Europe, the MSCA will significantly contribute to promote sustainable research in line with the European Green Deal, the United Nation's 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. All MSCA-funded projects are encouraged to address the principles of the **MSCA Green Charter**⁵ and implement measures to minimise the environmental footprint of their activities.

Synergies

² The term 'researcher at risk' refers to researchers at all stages of their career who are experiencing threats to their life, liberty, or research career, and those who are forced or have been forced to flee because of such threats.

³ <https://ec.europa.eu/msca/supervision>. While the Guidelines for MSCA supervision are non-binding, funded-projects are strongly encouraged to take them into account.

⁴ FAIR = Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable.

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/msca/green_charter. While the MSCA Green Charter is non-binding, funded-projects are strongly encouraged to take into account the principles it sets out.

The MSCA promote the creation of strong links with the cohesion policy funds⁶ and the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)⁷, notably by creating synergies through its COFUND action and enabling complementarities via awarding a Seal of Excellence⁸ certificate to proposals submitted to mono-beneficiary MSCA calls. The Seal is awarded to proposals that exceed all the evaluation thresholds set out in this work programme but cannot be funded due to lack of budget. The MSCA also encourage complementarities with other parts of Horizon Europe, such as the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)⁹, and synergies with other Union programmes, notably Erasmus+¹⁰, including its European Universities Initiative.

MSCA Intervention areas

There are five main MSCA intervention areas as set out in the Council Decision establishing the specific programme implementing Horizon Europe (Annex 1, page 11-13). All individual Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions contribute to these intervention areas to one extent or the other:

- Nurturing Excellence through Mobility of Researchers across Borders, Sectors and Disciplines;
- Fostering new Skills through Excellent Training of Researchers;
- Strengthening Human Capital and Skills Development across the European Research Area;
- Improving and Facilitating Synergies;
- Promoting Public Outreach.

The following Actions within the MSCA are implementing these intervention areas:

Action	Main Objective
MSCA Doctoral	The MSCA Doctoral Networks aim to train creative, entrepreneurial, innovative and resilient doctoral candidates, able to face current and

⁶ “Synergies between Horizon Europe and ERDF programmes (Draft Commission Notice)” C(2022) 4747 final. https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/news/all-research-and-innovation-news/synergies-guidance-out-2022-07-06_en

⁷ The Recovery and Resilience Facility supports reforms and investments undertaken by Member States. The aim is to mitigate the economic and social impact of the coronavirus pandemic and make European economies and societies more sustainable, resilient and better prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the green and digital transitions.

⁸ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/seal-excellence/funding-opportunities-under-msca_en

⁹ “Synergies between the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology”. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/40f1a820-2cc2-11ed-975d-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

¹⁰ “Synergies between the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions and Erasmus+ in the area of higher education”. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/f4d7d733-19ba-11ec-b4fe-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/>

Networks	future challenges and to convert knowledge and ideas into products and services for economic and social benefit. The MSCA Doctoral Networks will raise the attractiveness and excellence of doctoral training in Europe. They will equip researchers with the right combination of research-related and transferable competences and provide them with enhanced career perspectives in both the academic ¹¹ and non-academic sectors through international, inter-sectoral and interdisciplinary mobility combined with an innovation-oriented mind-set.
MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships	The goal of MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships is to enhance the creative and innovative potential of researchers holding a PhD, wishing to acquire new skills through advanced training, international, inter-sectoral and interdisciplinary mobility. MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships are open to excellent researchers of any nationality, including researchers wishing to reintegrate in Europe, researchers who are displaced by conflict as well as researchers with high potential aiming for a career restart in research. The scheme also encourages researchers to work on research and innovation projects in the non-academic sector.
MSCA Staff Exchanges	MSCA Staff Exchanges promote innovative international, inter-sectoral and interdisciplinary collaboration in research and innovation through exchanging staff and sharing knowledge and ideas at all stages of the innovation chain. The scheme fosters a shared culture of research and innovation that welcomes and rewards creativity and entrepreneurship and helps turn ideas into innovative products, services or processes. It is open to research, technical, administrative and managerial staff.
MSCA COFUND	MSCA COFUND co-finances new or existing doctoral programmes and postdoctoral fellowship schemes at national, regional or international level with the aim to spread the best practices of the MSCA including international, inter-sectoral and interdisciplinary research training, as well as international and cross-sectoral mobility of researchers at all stages of their career.
MSCA and Citizens	MSCA and Citizens , through the European Researchers' Night, aims to bring research and researchers closer to the public at large, to increase awareness of research and innovation activities and to boost public recognition of science and research education. It will also show the role of the researcher for the society and economy, as well as the impact of researchers' work on citizens' daily lives, and aim at raising young people's interest for research and scientific careers.

¹¹ See definitions at the end of the Work Programme part

MSCA Doctoral Networks

The MSCA Doctoral Networks aim to train creative, entrepreneurial, innovative and resilient doctoral candidates, able to face current and future challenges and to convert knowledge and ideas into products and services for economic and social benefit.

The MSCA Doctoral Networks will raise the attractiveness and excellence of doctoral training in Europe. They will equip researchers with the right combination of research-related and transferable competences and provide them with enhanced career perspectives in both the academic and non-academic sectors through international, inter-sectoral and interdisciplinary mobility combined with an innovation-oriented mind-set.

Expected impact

Proposals under this Action should contribute to the following expected impacts:

- Strengthen Europe's human capital base in R&I by training highly-skilled doctoral candidates;
- Improve the attractiveness of researchers' careers notably through better working and employment conditions of doctoral candidates in Europe;
- Enhance talent and knowledge circulation across the R&I landscape, through international, inter-sectoral and interdisciplinary mobility;
- Increase Europe's attractiveness as a leading research destination;
- Enhance the quality of R&I contributing to Europe's sustainable competitiveness;
- Establish sustainable collaboration between academic and non-academic organisations;
- Foster the culture of open science, innovation and entrepreneurship.

The following call(s) in this work programme contribute to this Action:

Call	Budgets (EUR million)		Deadline(s)
	2023	2024	
HORIZON-MSCA-2023-DN-01	434.80		28 Nov 2023
HORIZON-MSCA-2024-DN-01		451.15	27 Nov 2024
Overall indicative budget	434.80	451.15	

<i>operational capacity and exclusion</i>	
<i>Award criteria</i>	For application of the general award criteria, including weighting and thresholds, see the specific conditions at the end of this Work Programme part.
<i>Documents</i>	The documents are described in General Annex E.
<i>Procedure</i>	The general procedure is described in General Annex F. See exceptions and specific conditions at the end of this work programme part.
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The expected EU contribution depends on the number of person-months requested. For the applicable unit contributions, see specific conditions for MSCA at the end of this Work Programme part.
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	The general conditions are described in General Annex G. See exceptions and specific conditions at the end of this Work Programme part.

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

HORIZON-MSCA-2023-DN-01-01: MSCA Doctoral Networks 2023

Expected Outcome: Project results are expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

For supported doctoral candidates

- New research and transferable skills and competences, leading to improved employability and career prospects within and outside academia;
- New knowledge allowing the conversion of ideas into products and services, where relevant;
- Enhanced networking and communication capacities with scientific peers, as well as with the general public that will increase and broaden the research and innovation impact.

For participating organisations

- Improved quality, relevance and sustainability of doctoral training programmes and supervision arrangements;
- Enhanced cooperation and transfer of knowledge between sectors and disciplines;

- Increased integration of training and research activities between participating organisations;
- Boosted R&I capacity;
- Increased internationalisation and attractiveness;
- Regular feedback of research results into teaching and education at participating organisations.

Scope: MSCA Doctoral Networks will implement doctoral programmes, by partnerships of universities, research institutions and research infrastructures, businesses including SMEs, and other socio-economic actors from different countries across Europe and beyond. MSCA Doctoral Networks are indeed open to the participation of organisations from third countries, in view of fostering strategic international partnerships for the training and exchange of researchers.

These doctoral programmes will respond to well-identified needs in various R&I areas, expose the researchers to the academic and non-academic sectors, and offer training in research-related, as well as transferable skills¹³ and competences relevant for innovation and long-term employability (e.g. entrepreneurship, commercialisation of results, Intellectual Property Rights, communication). Proposals for doctoral networks can reflect existing or planned research partnerships among the participating organisations.

The selection procedure for doctoral candidates must be open, transparent and merit-based, in line with the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. The vacancy notice (to be widely advertised internationally, including on the EURAXESS¹⁴ website) must mention if the published rates include all employer and employee's taxes and contributions. If possible, the gross salary (net salary + employee's taxes and contributions) should be published.

MSCA Doctoral Networks are encouraged to lead to Industrial or Joint Doctorates.

Industrial Doctorates

Through Industrial Doctorates, doctoral candidates will step outside academia and develop skills in industry and business by being jointly supervised by academic and non-academic organisations, both of which can be established in the same EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country.

Joint Doctorates

Joint Doctorates represent a highly integrated type of international, inter-sectoral and multi/interdisciplinary collaboration in doctoral training. They lead to the delivery of joint,

¹³ As an illustration, Eurodoc published a list of such transferable skills at: <http://eurodoc.net/skills-report-2018.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/>

double or multiple doctoral degrees¹⁵ recognised in at least two EU Member States or Horizon Europe Associated Countries.

Supervisory Board

Each MSCA Doctoral Network should have a clearly identified supervisory board co-ordinating network-wide training, research and in particular supervision activities in line with the Guidelines for MSCA supervision, while establishing continuous communication and exchange of best practice among the participating organisations to maximise the benefits of the partnership.

Training activities

MSCA Doctoral Networks should exploit complementarities between participating organisations and foster sharing of knowledge and networking activities for example through the organisation of workshops and conferences. Proposed training activities should respond to well identified needs in various R&I areas, with appropriate references to inter- and multidisciplinary fields and follow the EU Principles for Innovative Doctoral Training¹⁶. They should be primarily focused on developing new scientific knowledge through original research on personalised projects.

Inter-sectoral secondments of researchers to other participating organisations, including in third countries, are encouraged when relevant, feasible and beneficial for the researchers and in line with the project objectives. This will increase the employability of the researchers outside academia.

Doctoral Networks should develop substantial training modules, including digital ones, addressing key transferable skills and competences common to all fields and fostering the culture of Open Science, innovation and entrepreneurship as well as good scientific conduct such as research integrity. In particular, Doctoral Networks should adequately prepare doctoral candidates for increased research collaboration and information-sharing made possible by new (digital) technologies (e.g. collaborative tools, opening access to publications and to other research outputs including data, FAIR data management, societal engagement and citizen science, etc.).

Supervision

Particular attention is paid to the quality of supervision and mentoring arrangements as well as career guidance. Joint supervision of the researchers is mandatory for Industrial and Joint Doctorates.

Career Development Plan

¹⁵ Every time this Work Programme part refers to doctoral degrees, this means that the degrees have to be recognised as such by the relevant authorities of the country or countries concerned.

¹⁶ [principles_for_innovative_doctoral_training.pdf](#)

A Career Development Plan must be established jointly by the supervisor and each recruited doctoral candidate. In case of joint supervision, such a plan should be established involving all supervisors. In addition to research objectives, this plan comprises the researcher's training and career needs, including training on transferable skills, teaching, planning for publications and participation in conferences and events aiming at opening science and research to citizens. The plan, established at the beginning of the recruitment, should be revised (and updated where needed) within 18 months.

Call - MSCA Doctoral Networks 2024

HORIZON-MSCA-2024-DN-01

Conditions for the Call

Indicative budget(s)¹⁷

Topics	Type of Action	Budgets (EUR million)	Expected EU contribution per project (EUR million)	Indicative number of projects expected to be funded
		2024		
Opening: 29 May 2024 Deadline(s): 27 Nov 2024				
HORIZON-MSCA-2024-DN-01-01	TMA Doctoral Networks	451.15		Not relevant
HORIZON-MSCA-2024-DN-01-01	TMA Doctoral Networks - Industrial Doctorates			Not relevant
HORIZON-MSCA-2024-DN-01-01	TMA Doctoral Networks - Joint Doctorates			Not relevant
Overall indicative budget		451.15		

General conditions relating to this call

<i>Admissibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex A. See exceptions
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¹⁷ The Director-General responsible for the call may decide to open the call up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date(s) of opening.
The Director-General responsible may delay the deadline(s) by up to two months.
All deadlines are at 17.00.00 Brussels local time.
The budget amounts are subject to the availability of the appropriations provided for in the general budget of the Union for years 2023 and 2024.

	and specific conditions at the end of this work programme part.
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	The general conditions are described in General Annex B. See exceptions and specific conditions at the end of this work programme part.
<i>Financial and operational capacity and exclusion</i>	The criteria are described in General Annex C.
<i>Award criteria</i>	For application of the general award criteria, including weighting and thresholds, see the specific conditions at the end of this Work Programme part.
<i>Documents</i>	The documents are described in General Annex E.
<i>Procedure</i>	The general procedure is described in General Annex F. See exceptions and specific conditions at the end of this work programme part.
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<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	The general conditions are described in General Annex G. See exceptions and specific conditions at the end of this Work Programme part.

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

HORIZON-MSCA-2024-DN-01-01: MSCA Doctoral Networks 2024

Expected Outcome: Project results are expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

For supported doctoral candidates

- New research and transferable skills and competences, leading to improved employability and career prospects within and outside academia;
- New knowledge allowing the conversion of ideas into products and services, where relevant;
- Enhanced networking and communication capacities with scientific peers, as well as with the general public that will increase and broaden the research and innovation impact.

For participating organisations

- Improved quality, relevance and sustainability of doctoral training programmes and supervision arrangements;
- Enhanced cooperation and transfer of knowledge between sectors and disciplines;
- Increased integration of training and research activities between participating organisations;
- Boosted R&I capacity;
- Increased internationalisation and attractiveness;
- Regular feedback of research results into teaching and education at participating organisations.

Scope: MSCA Doctoral Networks will implement doctoral programmes, by partnerships of universities, research institutions and research infrastructures, businesses including SMEs, and other socio-economic actors from different countries across Europe and beyond. MSCA Doctoral Networks are indeed open to the participation of organisations from third countries, in view of fostering strategic international partnerships for the training and exchange of researchers.

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The selection procedure for doctoral candidates must be open, transparent and merit-based, in line with the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. The vacancy notice (to be widely advertised internationally, including on the EURAXESS¹⁹ website) must mention if the published rates include all employer and employee's taxes and contributions. If possible, the gross salary (net salary + employee's taxes and contributions) should be published.

MSCA Doctoral Networks are encouraged to lead to Industrial or Joint Doctorates.

Industrial Doctorates

Through Industrial Doctorates, doctoral candidates will step outside academia and develop skills in industry and business by being jointly supervised by academic and non-academic organisations, both of which can be established in the same EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country.

¹⁸ As an illustration, Eurodoc published a list of such transferable skills at: <http://eurodoc.net/skills-report-2018.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/>

Joint Doctorates

Joint Doctorates represent a highly integrated type of international, inter-sectoral and multi/interdisciplinary collaboration in doctoral training. They lead to the delivery of joint, double or multiple doctoral degrees²⁰ recognised in at least two EU Member States or Horizon Europe Associated Countries.

Supervisory Board

Each MSCA Doctoral Network should have a clearly identified supervisory board coordinating network-wide training, research and in particular supervision activities in line with the Guidelines for MSCA supervision, while establishing continuous communication and exchange of best practice among the participating organisations to maximise the benefits of the partnership.

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MSCA Doctoral Networks should exploit complementarities between participating organisations and foster sharing of knowledge and networking activities for example through the organisation of workshops and conferences. Proposed training activities should respond to well identified needs in various R&I areas, with appropriate references to inter- and multidisciplinary fields and follow the EU Principles for Innovative Doctoral Training²¹. They should be primarily focused on developing new scientific knowledge through original research on personalised projects.

Inter-sectoral secondments of researchers to other participating organisations, including in third countries, are encouraged when relevant, feasible and beneficial for the researchers and in line with the project objectives. This will increase the employability of the researchers outside academia.

Doctoral Networks should develop substantial training modules, including digital ones, addressing key transferable skills and competences common to all fields and fostering the culture of Open Science, innovation and entrepreneurship as well as good scientific conduct such as research integrity. In particular, Doctoral Networks should adequately prepare doctoral candidates for increased research collaboration and information-sharing made possible by new (digital) technologies (e.g. collaborative tools, opening access to publications and to other research outputs including data, FAIR data management, societal engagement and citizen science, etc.).

Supervision

Particular attention is paid to the quality of supervision and mentoring arrangements as well as career guidance. Joint supervision of the researchers is mandatory for Industrial and Joint Doctorates.

²⁰ Every time this Work Programme part refers to doctoral degrees, this means that the degrees have to be recognised as such by the relevant authorities of the country or countries concerned.

²¹ [principles_for_innovative_doctoral_training.pdf](#)

Career Development Plan

A Career Development Plan must be established jointly by the supervisor and each recruited doctoral candidate. In case of joint supervision, such a plan should be established involving all supervisors. In addition to research objectives, this plan comprises the researcher's training and career needs, including training on transferable skills, teaching, planning for publications and participation in conferences and events aiming at opening science and research to citizens. The plan, established at the beginning of the recruitment, should be revised (and updated where needed) within 18 months.

Specific conditions for the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions

DEFINITIONS

The following definitions apply:

'Academic sector' means public or private higher education establishments awarding academic degrees, public or private non-profit research organisations⁸¹ and International European Research Organisations (IERO)⁸².

'Non-academic sector' means any socio-economic actor not included in the academic sector and fulfilling the requirements of the Horizon Europe Rules for Participation.

'Associated partners' are entities which participate in the action, but without the right to charge costs or claim contributions. They contribute to the implementation of the action, but do not sign the grant agreement. Associated partners may not employ the researchers under the action⁸³.

'Associated partners linked to a beneficiary' are organisations with an established capital or legal link with the beneficiary, which is not limited to the action nor specifically created for its implementation. These entities implement action tasks described in Annex 1 of the grant agreement, i.e. hosting and training of researchers in Doctoral Networks and Postdoctoral Fellowships and hosting and seconding staff in Staff Exchanges. The associated partners linked to a beneficiary do not have the right to claim unit contributions and may not employ the researcher under the action. In addition, they must fulfil the eligibility conditions⁸⁴ for participation and funding applicable to the beneficiary they are linked to. The type of link and involvement of such entities must be clearly described in the proposal and will be assessed as part of the evaluation.

'Beneficiaries' are the legal entities that sign the grant agreement (either directly or through an accession form) and have the responsibility for the proper implementation of the action. They contribute directly to the implementation of the research, transfer of knowledge and training activities. Depending on the type of MSCA action, this involves recruiting,

⁸¹ If requested by the granting authority, institutions with self-declared research organisations status must provide evidence that their main objective is to carry out research and/or technological development. An assessment will be made on the basis of indicators such as share of research budget, volume of scientific publications and/or registered patents.

⁸² 'International European Research Organisation' (IERO) means an international organisation, the majority of whose members are EU Member States or Horizon Europe Associated Countries, and whose principal objective is to promote scientific and technological cooperation in Europe (see Article 2(15) of the Regulation establishing Horizon Europe - the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination.

⁸³ For Global Postdoctoral Fellowships and COFUND Postdoctoral Programmes outgoing phase, this restriction does not apply. The associated partner hosting the outgoing phase can conclude an additional employment contract with the researcher to ensure adequate medical/social insurance in the outgoing country.

⁸⁴ See specific conditions at the end of this Work Programme part.

supervising, hosting, training or seconding researchers/research staff or managing and/or funding programmes.

‘Implementing partners’ means third parties implementing the MSCA COFUND Doctoral or Postdoctoral programmes by recruiting researchers. Implementing partners can receive financial support from the beneficiary.

Implementing partners that are identified in the proposal must include a letter of commitment in the proposal to ensure their active participation in the action. The involvement of any implementing partner for which no such evidence of commitment is submitted will not be taken into account during evaluation.

‘Interdisciplinarity’ means the integration of information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts or theories from two or more scientific disciplines. The term discipline refers to the first level of MSCA keywords⁸⁵.

1. MSCA DOCTORAL NETWORKS

1.1. Applicable unit contributions

The EU contribution for MSCA Doctoral Networks will take the form of unit contributions, as stipulated in Decision of 11 March 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions and unit contributions for Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions under the Horizon Europe Programme.

The following budget categories apply:

MSCA Doctoral Networks	Contributions for recruited researchers					Institutional unit contributions	
	per person-month					per person-month	
	Living allowance	Mobility allowance	Family allowance (if applicable)	Long-term leave allowance (if applicable)	Special needs allowance (if applicable)	Research, training and networking contribution	Management and indirect contribution
	EUR 3 400	EUR 600	EUR 660	EUR 4 000 x % covered by the beneficiary	requested unit ⁸⁶ x (1/number of months)	EUR 1 600	EUR 1 200

A country correction coefficient applies to the living allowance in order to ensure equal treatment and purchasing power parity for all researchers. This coefficient is the one

⁸⁵ [MSCA Keywords.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁸⁶ The pre-defined categories are as follows: EUR 3 000, EUR 4 500, EUR 6 000, EUR 9 500, EUR 13 000, EUR 18 500, EUR 27 500, EUR 35 500, EUR 47 500 and EUR 60 000.

applicable to the country of the recruiting beneficiary (see Table 1 at the end of this Work Programme part). The living allowance is a gross amount, including compulsory deductions under national law, such as employer and employee social security contributions and direct taxes. The beneficiary must recruit each eligible doctoral candidate under an employment contract or equivalent direct contract with full social security coverage (including sickness, parental, unemployment and invalidity benefits, pension rights, benefits in respect of accidents at work and occupational diseases). An exemption from this rule can be accepted only in cases where national legislation or the equivalent internal regulations of International European Research Organisations (IERO), entities created under Union law, or an international organisation, prohibit this possibility and subject to the prior agreement of the granting authority.

When an employment contract cannot be provided, the beneficiary may exceptionally recruit the doctoral candidate under a 'fixed-amount fellowship'. In this case, the living allowance will be halved and the beneficiary must ensure that the doctoral candidate enjoys minimum social security coverage (including sickness, parental and invalidity benefits, and benefits for accidents at work and occupational diseases).

The beneficiary must pay to the doctoral candidates at least the amount of the **living allowance** (minus all compulsory deductions under national legislation). A top-up may be paid to the researchers in order to complement this contribution. In addition to the living allowance, all doctoral candidates must receive a **mobility allowance**. This allowance covers their additional, private mobility-related costs (e.g. travel and accommodation costs), not their professional costs under the action, which are covered by the research, training and networking contribution.

If the recruited doctoral candidate has or acquires family obligations during the action duration, i.e. persons linked to him/her by (i) marriage, or (ii) a relationship with equivalent status to a marriage recognised by the legislation of the country or region where this relationship was formalised; or (iii) dependent children who are actually being maintained by the researcher, the **family allowance** must be paid to him/her as well.

The **long-term leave allowance** contributes to the personnel costs incurred by the beneficiaries in case of the researchers' leave, including maternity, paternity, parental, sick or special leave, longer than 30 consecutive days. The **special needs allowance** contributes to the additional costs for the acquisition of special needs items and services for researchers with disabilities, whose long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments⁸⁷ are certified by a competent national authority, and of such nature that their participation in the action may not be possible without them (e.g. assistance by third persons, adaptation of work environment, additional travel/transportation costs). These special needs items or services must not have been funded from another source (e.g. social security or health insurance). Both long-term leave and special needs allowances should be requested when the need arises. The

⁸⁷ See Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

research, training and networking contribution should cover, for example, costs for training and networking activities that contribute directly to the researchers' career development (e.g. participation in conferences, trips related to work on the action, training, language courses, seminars, lab material, books, library records, publication costs), research expenses, visa-related fees and travel expenses, additional costs arising from each secondment of six months or less, which require mobility from the place of residence (e.g. travel and accommodation costs).

The **management and indirect contribution** should cover the beneficiary's additional costs in connection with the action (e.g. personnel costs for project management/coordination, indirect costs).

The above rates apply to doctoral candidates devoting themselves to their project on a full-time basis. Researchers may, in agreement with the supervisor and beneficiary and with prior approval by the granting authority, implement their project on a part-time basis. Such a request is limited to personal or family reasons. In cases of part-time work, the doctoral candidates must work at least 50% of the full working time in their recruiting organisation for the action funded by the MSCA. The recruiting beneficiary should report costs as pro rata of the applicable full-time unit contributions.

1.2. Admissibility

The following exception to the General Annex A applies:

- The page limit of the application is 30 pages (excluding annexes).

1.3. Eligibility

Given the specific nature of MSCA Doctoral Networks, the following exceptions and additional eligibility criteria apply. This section also contains eligibility conditions, which apply during action implementation but cannot be verified at proposal stage.

- All proposals must indicate if they are resubmitted from the previous MSCA Doctoral Networks call under Horizon Europe.
- Proposals submitted to the previous call of MSCA Doctoral Networks under Horizon Europe and having received a score of less than 80% must not be resubmitted the following year.

1.3.1. Participating organisations

- Applications must be submitted by a consortium including at least three independent legal entities, each established in a different EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country and with at least one of them established in an EU Member State. Should none of them be entitled to award a doctoral degree, a university or a consortium/grouping of academic/research institutions entitled to award a doctoral degree must be added to the project as an associated partner or an associated partner linked to a beneficiary.

- Not more than 40.0% of the EU contribution may be allocated to beneficiaries in the same country or to a single International European Research Organisation (IERO) or international organisation.
- International organisations with headquarters in an EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country will be deemed to be established in this Member State or Associated Country.
- Affiliated entities are not allowed to participate as they cannot claim costs in MSCA Doctoral Networks.
- All beneficiaries must recruit at least one doctoral candidate. They are required to host at their premises and supervise recruited researchers, or use associated partners linked to them to do so⁸⁸.
- In order to reach the objectives of Joint Doctorates, at least three independent legal entities must be entitled to award doctoral degrees. At least two of the institutions conferring a joint, double or multiple doctoral degree must be established in an EU Member State and/or Horizon Europe Associated Country. An applicant from the academic sector, which has transferred the right of awarding a doctoral degree to a consortium/grouping of academic/research institutions to which it belongs to, is also eligible. Applicants must provide, at the time of the submission of the proposal, a pre-agreement to award a joint, double or multiple degree to the doctoral candidate(s). The proposal should indicate from which institutions a researcher is expected to receive the degree(s).
- Joint Doctorates must set up a joint governance structure with joint admission, selection, supervision, monitoring and assessment procedures.

1.3.2. Recruited researchers

- Supported researchers must be **doctoral candidates**, i.e. not already in possession⁸⁹ of a doctoral degree at the date of the recruitment.
- Researchers must be enrolled in a doctoral programme leading to the award of a doctoral degree in at least one EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country, and for Joint Doctorates in at least two.

⁸⁸ In exceptional cases, where a beneficiary is established in a country different from the place where the recruited researcher is hosted, the country correction coefficient of the hosting entity is taken into account during the grant agreement preparation process, in order to ensure the correct budget calculation.

⁸⁹ Researchers who have successfully defended their doctoral thesis but who have not yet formally been awarded the doctoral degree will not be considered eligible.

- Recruited researchers can be of any nationality and must comply with the following **mobility rule**: they must not have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in the country of the recruiting beneficiary for more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately before their recruitment date.

For 'International European Research Organisations' (IERO), 'international organisations', or entities created under Union law, the researchers must not have spent more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately before their recruitment in the same appointing organisation.

Compulsory national service, short stays such as holidays and time spent by the researcher as part of a procedure for obtaining refugee status under the Geneva Convention⁹⁰ are not taken into account.

- **Secondments are eligible for up to one third of the actual months spent implementing the research training activities under the action. This limitation does not apply in the case of Industrial Doctorates and Joint Doctorates.**
- In case of industrial doctorates, doctoral candidates must spend at least 50% of their fellowship duration in the non-academic sector.

1.3.3. Duration of the action

- The duration of the action must not exceed 48 months from the starting date set out in the grant agreement (including the time needed to recruit and select the doctoral candidates), except in the case of joint doctorates where this maximum duration is 60 months.
- The duration of each fellowship (on the basis of full-time employment) is minimum 3 and maximum **36 months, except in the case of joint doctorates, where this maximum duration is 48 months.**
- **The overall EU contribution for MSCA Doctoral Networks actions is limited to a maximum of 540 person-months.**

1.4. Award criteria

- Proposals will be evaluated by experts on the basis of the **award criteria** 'excellence', 'impact' and 'quality and efficiency of the implementation'.
- Evaluation scores will be awarded for each of these criteria, and not for the different aspects listed in the table below. Each criterion will be scored out of 5. Scores will be awarded with a resolution of one decimal place and will be subject to a weighting factor as indicated in the table below.
- Proposals scoring equal to or above 70% will be considered for funding — within the limits of the available call budget. Other proposals will be rejected.

⁹⁰ 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol.

Excellence	Impact	Quality and efficiency of the implementation
Quality and pertinence of the project's research and innovation objectives (and the extent to which they are ambitious, and go beyond the state of the art)	<p>Contribution to structuring doctoral training at the European level and to strengthening European innovation capacity, including the potential for:</p> <p>a) meaningful contribution of the non-academic sector to the doctoral training, as appropriate to the implementation mode and research field</p> <p>b) developing sustainable elements of doctoral programmes</p>	Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages
Soundness of the proposed methodology (including interdisciplinary approaches, consideration of the gender dimension and other diversity aspects if relevant for the research project, and the quality of open science practices)	Credibility of the measures to enhance the career perspectives and employability of researchers and contribution to their skills development	Quality, capacity and role of each participant, including hosting arrangements and extent to which the consortium as a whole brings together the necessary expertise
Quality and credibility of the training programme (including transferable skills, inter/multidisciplinary, inter-sectoral and gender as well as other diversity aspects)	Suitability and quality of the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities	
Quality of the supervision (including mandatory joint supervision for industrial	The magnitude and importance of the project's contribution to the expected scientific, societal	

Excellence	Impact	Quality and efficiency of the implementation
and joint doctorate projects)	and economic impacts	
50%	30%	20%
Weighting		

1.5. Procedure

- Proposals must be submitted to only one of eight 'main evaluation panels': Chemistry (CHE), Social Sciences and Humanities (SOC), Economic Sciences (ECO), Information Science and Engineering (ENG), Environment and Geosciences (ENV), Life Sciences (LIF), Mathematics (MAT), Physics (PHY). Industrial and joint doctorates will be ranked in the scientific panel of submission. Each panel will establish a ranked list.
- The distribution of the indicative budget of the call will be proportional to the number of eligible proposals received in each panel. If the budget allocated to any panel exceeds the requirements of all proposals positively evaluated⁹¹ in that panel, the excess budget will be reallocated to the other panels based on the distribution described above. Equally, if the allocated funding to a panel is insufficient to fund the highest ranked proposal in that panel, the necessary budget will be transferred from the other panels based on the distribution described above, in order to ensure that the highest ranked proposal can be funded. In order to ensure budget optimisation and an equitable success rate across panels, the excess budget remaining after the initial allocation of funding to the proposals in the panels may be transferred between panels.

Ex-aequo Proposals

- When the total scores of two or more proposals are equal (ex-aequo cases), the priority order will be established as follows:
 - The proposals will be prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for the criterion 'Excellence'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on scores for the criterion 'Impact'.
 - If necessary, the gender balance among the supervisors named in the proposal will be used as a factor for prioritisation.
 - If a distinction still cannot be made, the panel may decide to further prioritise by considering other factors such as gender and other diversity aspects in the research activities, participation of the non-academic sector (including

⁹¹ Measured as proposals having passed all relevant evaluation thresholds.

involvement of SMEs), geographical diversity⁹², international cooperation, favourable employment and working conditions or relationship to the Horizon Europe objectives in general. These factors will be documented in the panel report.

1.6. Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements

The following exceptions and additional conditions apply:

- Eligible costs must take the form of unit contributions, as stipulated in Decision of 11 March 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions and unit contributions for Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions under the Horizon Europe Programme.
- When associated partners are involved, beneficiaries are encouraged to sign a partnership agreement with them to regulate the internal relationship between all participating organisations. The partnership agreement(s) must comply with the grant agreement.
- Beneficiaries must ensure full access — on a royalty-free basis — for the recruited researchers to background and results needed for their activities under the action.
- The following deliverables will have to be submitted for grants awarded under this topic:
 - establishment of a **supervisory board** of the network;
 - **progress report** submitted within 30 days after one year from the starting date of the action;
 - **mid-term meeting** organised between the participants and the granting authority;
 - **mobility declaration** submitted within 20 days after the recruitment of each researcher and updated (if needed) via the Funding & Tenders Portal Continuous Reporting tool;
 - **career development plan**: a document describing how the individual Career Development Plans have been established (listing also the researchers for whom such plans have been put in place), submitted before the mid-term meeting;
 - **evaluation questionnaire** completed by each recruited researcher and submitted at the end of the research training activity; a **follow-up questionnaire** submitted two years later;
 - **data management plan** submitted at mid-term and an update towards the end of the project if needed;
 - **plan for the dissemination and exploitation of results, including communication activities**, submitted at mid-term and an update towards the end of the project.

⁹² Defined as the number of EU Member States or Associated Countries represented in the proposals, not otherwise receiving funds from projects higher up the ranking list (and if equal in number, then by budget).

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Table 1: Country correction coefficients (CCC) for Doctoral Networks and Postdoctoral Fellowships living allowances

For countries where the correction coefficient is not indicated, the Commission will decide on a case-by-case basis.

Country Code ¹¹⁷	CCC
EU Member States	
AT	106,3%
BE	100,0%
BG	54,8%
CY	77,5%
CZ	79,1%
DE	98,3%
DK	132,0%
EE	80,3%
EL	81,6%

ES	91,3%
FI	119,5%
FR	116,4%
HR	75,5%
HU	72,0%
IE	119,5%
IT	97,4%
LT	72,8%
LU	100,0%
LV	76,0%
MT	88,1%
NL	109,6%
PL	70,5%
PT	84,3%
RO	65,4%
SE	125,4%
SI	83,3%
SK	78,1%

Third Countries	
AE	94,0%
AL	59,0%
AM	77,7%
AO	130,0%
AR	62,5%

AU	100,9%
AZ	82,1%
BA	63,9%
BB	112,8%
BD	81,2%
BF	95,0%
BI	81,3%
BJ	91,9%
BO	83,9%
BR	84,7%
BW	62,9%
BY	66,8%
BZ	79,9%
CA	95,2%
CD	151,9%
CF	109,3%
CG	117,3%
CH	128,6%
CI	94,6%
CL	69,5%
CM	87,8%
CN	90,0%
CO	67,6%
CR	77,6%
CU	82,5%
CV	69,6%

DJ	87,2%
DO	61,4%
DZ	67,9%
EC	79,4%
EG	67,4%
ER	120,4%
ET	81,9%
FJ	73,5%
FO	132,0%
GA	107,9%
GE	62,2%
GH	73,9%
GM	68,8%
GN	84,2%
GT	87,3%
GW	81,9%
GY	71,7%
HK	115,4%
HN	77,4%
HT	85,0%
ID	73,0%
IL	107,2%
IN	73,8%
IS	130,5%
JM	84,4%
JO	98,8%

¹¹⁷ [ISO 3166 alpha-2](#), except for Greece and the United Kingdom (EL and UK used respectively instead of GR and GB).

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JP	103,3%
KE	85,6%
KG	73,7%
KH	78,6%
KM	75,7%
KR	95,5%
KZ	71,9%
LA	89,8%
LB	116,2%
LI	128,6%
LK	77,4%
LR	149,6%
LS	56,2%
MA	72,6%
MD	63,2%
ME	61,6%
MG	85,6%
MK	50,7%
ML	90,0%
MM	67,0%
MR	68,1%
MU	73,3%
MW	60,9%
MX	60,3%
MY	67,2%
MZ	71,7%
NA	66,9%
NC	107,4%

NE	80,0%
NG	85,2%
NI	67,3%
NO	128,7%
NP	87,8%
NZ	98,9%
PA	76,8%
PE	88,0%
PG	99,8%
PH	81,3%
PK	54,8%
PS	112,5%
PY	63,0%
RS	57,7%
RU	97,3%
RW	81,6%
SA	83,4%
SB	112,7%
SD	107,8%
SG	124,4%
SL	107,1%
SN	98,4%
SR	69,1%
SV	72,2%
SZ	61,3%
TD	100,1%
TG	82,8%
TH	78,8%

TJ	58,4%
TL	88,7%
TM	82,9%
TN	67,4%
TR	64,5%
TT	81,8%
TW	84,7%
TZ	67,9%
UA	68,5%
UG	67,2%
UK	136,9%
US	102,3%
UY	89,7%
UZ	68,0%
VE	139,2%
VN	61,3%
VU	104,8%
WS	82,2%
XK	70,2%
YE	104,4%
ZA	55,3%
ZM	74,8%
ZW	98,3%