



Horizon Europe Programme

Guide for Applicants

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions – Postdoctoral Fellowships (PF)

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Disclaimer

This guide aims to support potential applicants to the PF 2022 call. It is provided for information purposes only and is not intended to replace consultation of any applicable legal sources. Neither the European Commission nor the European Research Executive Agency (or any person acting on their behalf) can be held responsible for the use made of this guidance document. Note that the guidance provided in the Annotated Model Grant Agreement shall prevail in case of discrepancies.



HISTORY OF CHANGES			
Version	Publication Date	Change	Page
1.0	22 June 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial version (2021 call) 	
1.1	11 May 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addition of definition of Gender Equality Plan Revision of definition of Associated Partners for submission purposes Addition of procedure for the evaluation of resubmitted proposals Revision of eligibility of non-compliant non-academic placements Addition of Doctoral degree as eligibility criterion Clarification on how to encode secondments and non-academic placements Clarification on short visits Clarification on secondments for GF Clarification on description of secondments and non-academic placements in part B2 Clarification on how to apply for EURATOM funding Clarification on part B2 content Clarification on abstract content Link to 8-years research experience calculation tool added Link to FAQs 	 4 4 6 7 7, 9 10 11 11 11-12 12 13 14 15 16

Note

National Contact Points (NCPs) have been set up across Europe and beyond by the national governments to provide information and personalised support to Horizon Europe applicants in their native language. The mission of the NCPs is to raise awareness, inform and advise on Horizon Europe funding opportunities as well as to support potential applicants in the *preparation, submission and follow-up* of the grant applications. For details on the NCP in your country, please consult the [National Contact Points page](#).

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Postdoctoral Fellowships – A Few Definitions

Academic sector means public or private higher education establishments awarding academic degrees, public or private non-profit research organisations¹ and International European Research Organisations (IERO).²

Associated partners are entities, which participate in the action,³ 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 action.^{4,5}

Beneficiary is the legal entity that signs the grant agreement (either directly or through an accession form) and has the responsibility for the proper implementation of the action. They contribute directly to the implementation of the research, transfer of knowledge and training activities. In the case of the Postdoctoral Fellowships call, this involves recruiting, supervising, hosting, training and, where appropriate, seconding the researcher.

Gender Equality Plan: Having a gender equality plan is an eligibility criterion for Public bodies, Higher education establishments and Research organisations from Member States and Associated Countries. Be aware that if the proposal is selected, having a Gender Equality Plan will be necessary before the grant agreement signature (applicable on calls with deadlines in 2022 and beyond). Please refer to the [Horizon Europe guidance on gender equality plans](#).

Long-term residence means a period of legal and continuous residence within EU Member States or Horizon Europe associated countries of at least five consecutive years. Periods of absence from the territory of the EU Member State or Horizon Europe associated country will be taken into account for the calculation of this period where they are shorter than six consecutive months and do not exceed in total ten months within this period.

¹ 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.

² '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(14) of the Regulation establishing Horizon Europe - the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination.

³ For the purposes of Horizon Europe, each specific project receiving funding is referred to as an "action." In the present document, the terms "project" and "action" are therefore used interchangeably.

⁴ In the framework of MSCA-PF-2022, only the following associated partners should be included in the proposal Part A (refer also to point 3): host organisations where the outgoing phase of GF or a non-academic placement are taking place. Other associated partners (such as those implementing secondments) should be included only in the Part B.

⁵ For Global Postdoctoral Fellowships 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.

Non-academic sector means any socio-economic actor not included in the academic sector and fulfilling the requirements of the Horizon Europe (HE) Rules for Participation.⁶

Non-associated Third Countries (TC) are countries that neither are EU member states (MS), nor associated to Horizon Europe (AC).

The **supervisor** is the senior researcher appointed at the beneficiary to supervise the postdoctoral researcher throughout the whole duration of the action. For Global Postdoctoral Fellowships, an additional supervisor must be appointed at the associated partner for the time spent during the outgoing phase.

1. Introduction

This call for proposals offers fellowships to researchers holding a PhD wishing to undertake mobility either to or between EU Member States or Horizon Europe Associated Countries (European Postdoctoral Fellowships), or to a non-associated Third Country (Global Postdoctoral Fellowships) in order to undertake an original and personalised research and innovation project. The objective is to improve researchers' employability and career prospects within academia and beyond, with a strong focus on interdisciplinarity and intersectoral experience.

Applications are made jointly by the researcher and a beneficiary in the academic or non-academic sector, which must be established in an EU Member State (MS) or Horizon Europe Associated Country (AC). All domains of research and innovation are eligible for funding, including those covered by the Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom)⁷. Applicants are therefore free to choose the field(s) of their proposed research in a fully bottom-up manner.

Proposals may include an additional period of up to six months ("non-academic placement period") at a non-academic sector organisation established in an MS or AC.

Before preparing your application, you are strongly advised to consult the following documents:

- [MSCA Work Programme 2021-2022](#) and [General Annexes](#) to the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2021-2022
- [Standard Application Form](#): Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions - Postdoctoral Fellowships
- [MSCA list of keywords](#)

⁶ Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of 28 April 2021 (OJEU 12.05.2021, L170, p.1).

⁷ Special conditions and eligibility criteria apply for EURATOM, please refer to section 5 of this document.

Links to other official documents, including the [Horizon Europe Programme Guide](#), are provided on the [call page](#) on the Funding and Tenders Portal and are also accessible via the REA [website](#).

2. Admissibility and Eligibility Conditions

Applicant researchers must meet all eligibility criteria (see relevant sections below) on the day of the call deadline. The proposed beneficiary must ensure compliance with the admissibility and eligibility criteria before submitting the proposal and must maintain all supporting documentation.

Before completion of the formal admissibility and eligibility checks, REA cannot answer questions related to the admissibility and eligibility of a specific proposal. Guidance can be provided by NCPs.

No documents for proof of eligibility need to be uploaded with the application. However, REA may request supporting documents to assess the eligibility after the call deadline.

Resubmissions: please note that as of the MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships 2022 call, proposals involving the same recruiting organisation (and for Global Postdoctoral Fellowships also the associated partner hosting the outgoing phase) and individual researcher submitted to the previous call of MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships under Horizon Europe and having received a score of less than 70% must not be resubmitted the following year.

IMPORTANT	
EUROPEAN and GLOBAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The individual researcher and the supervisor must be two different people. • Applications must be complete and contain all parts and supporting documents: fill in the submission forms online that will become part A of the proposal, upload parts B1 and B2. • In case of an optional non-academic placement, the associated partner must provide an up-to-date letter of commitment, to be submitted with the application, confirming their precise role and active participation in the proposal.
Additional for GLOBAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The associated partner for the outgoing phase must provide an up-to-date letter of commitment, to be submitted with the application, confirming their precise role and active participation in the proposal.

If one or more of the above conditions are not met, the proposal will not be evaluated.

However, if the non-academic placement is non-eligible (academic organisation or lack of letter of commitment), the proposal will be evaluated without taking into consideration this part.

Please note that:

- Only one proposal per individual researcher can be submitted. In case of several proposals involving the same individual researcher, only the last submitted one will be considered eligible. However, note that a supervisor can be involved in more than one proposal in the same call.
- If proposals with the same research objectives and work plan are submitted by the same host organisation for different researchers, only the first submitted one will be considered eligible.

EUROPEAN POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS		
STANDARD DURATION		From 12 to 24 months
ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA		
RESEARCHER	Doctorate degree	The researcher must be in possession of a doctoral degree or have successfully defended their doctoral thesis before call deadline.
	Nationality	Any
	Mobility⁸	The researcher cannot have resided or carried out his/her main activity (work, studies, etc.) in the country of the beneficiary for more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately prior to the call deadline. ⁹

⁸ The following periods are not taken into account: a) compulsory national service; b) time spent as part of a procedure for obtaining refugee status under the Geneva Convention; c) short stays (such as holidays), i.e. the researcher did not reside or did not have their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in the country during that period.

⁹ In case of International European Research Organisations, international organisations with headquarters in an EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country or entities created under Union law, the researchers must not have spent more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately preceding the call deadline, in the same appointing organisation.

	Research experience (full-time equivalent)	<p>Maximum 8 years from date of award of the (first) doctoral degree.¹⁰</p> <p>This limit can be extended (in days) for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maternity leave (18 months – i.e. 548 days per child born after the PhD award date, <u>or</u> the exact duration of maternity leave taken, whichever is longest); - Paternity leave (exact duration per child born after the PhD award date); - Research in a non-associated TC (only for nationals or long-term residents of MS or AC, wishing to reintegrate in Europe);¹¹ - Compulsory national service; - Time spent not working in research; - Long-term sick leave (periods > 30 days). <p>More information on the calculation of the 8 years research experience are available in section 8.</p>
PARTICIPATING ORGANISATION	Beneficiary¹²	Single independent legal entity established in an EU MS or HE AC.

¹⁰ Applicants who have successfully defended their doctoral thesis but who have not yet formally been awarded the doctoral degree will also be considered as postdoctoral researchers and will be considered eligible to apply. A medical doctor degree will be accepted only when it corresponds to a doctoral degree or if the researcher can demonstrate his/her appointment in a position that requires doctoral equivalency (e.g. professorship appointment). Medical doctor degrees corresponding to basic medical training as defined in Annex V of Directive 2005/36/EC will not be considered a doctoral degree.

¹¹ Researchers reintegrating to Europe from a non-associated TC must be based in the TC at the call deadline or have directly moved to Europe (i.e. any EU MS or Horizon Europe AC) within the 12-month period immediately prior to the call deadline.

¹² The same conditions are applicable to *Associated partners linked to a beneficiary* (see also MSCA Work Programme, Definitions section).

GLOBAL POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS	
STANDARD DURATION	From 24 to 36 months: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outgoing phase of minimum 12 and maximum 24 months in a non-associated Third Country; • Mandatory 12-month return phase in MS / AC.
ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA	
RESEARCHER	Doctorate degree The researcher must be in possession of a doctoral degree or have successfully defended their doctoral thesis before call deadline.
	Nationality Nationals or long-term residents of MS or AC.
	Mobility¹³ The researcher cannot have resided or carried out his/her main activity (work, studies, etc.) in the country of the associated partner hosting the outgoing phase for more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately before the call deadline. ¹⁴
	Research experience (full-time equivalent) Maximum 8 years from date of award of the (first) doctoral degree. ¹⁵ This limit can be extended (in days) for the following reasons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Maternity leave (18 months – i.e. 548 days per child born after the PhD award date, <u>or</u> the exact duration of maternity leave taken, whichever is longest); – Paternity leave (exact duration per child born after the PhD award date); – Compulsory national service; – Time spent not working in research; – Long term sick leave (periods > 30 days). More information on the calculation of the 8 years research experience are available in section 8.

¹³ See footnote 7.

¹⁴ See footnote 8.

¹⁵ See footnote 9.

PARTICIPATING ORGANISATION	Beneficiary ¹⁶	Single independent legal entity established in MS or AC.
	Associated partner hosting the outgoing phase	Single independent legal entity established in a non-associated Third Country.

Refugee Status

Note that researchers who are refugees in an EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country according to the Geneva Convention may also apply to both European and Global Postdoctoral Fellowships, irrespective of whether they are long-term residents (see definitions) or not, if they fulfil the other eligibility conditions.

3. Secondments and Non-Academic Placements

Proposals may **include** an optional secondment during the fellowship and/or **add** an optional non-academic placement period (see explanation in the [MSCA Work Programme](#)), provided they are in line with the project objectives and add significant value and/or impact to the fellowship.

The relevance and added value of these periods will be assessed by the evaluators and may therefore impact the final score awarded to the proposal. Proposals will not be penalised for not including a secondment or non-academic placement period.

Secondments and Non-Academic Placements are different in nature and follow different rules as explained in the table below.

	Secondment	Non-Academic Placement
Encoding in submission forms - part A 	Must NOT be encoded as a participating organisation (associated partner).	Must be encoded as a participating organisation (associated partner).
Call specific questions (part A - section 5)	Tick the box and indicate the number of months.	Not applicable
Maximum Duration	<u>European Postdoctoral Fellowships</u> : Up to 1/3 of the standard project duration.	Up to 6 months duration.

¹⁶ See footnote 11.

	<u>Global Postdoctoral Fellowships:</u> Secondments are permitted for up to 1/3 of the outgoing phase.	
Timing	<p><u>European Postdoctoral Fellowships:</u> At any time during the standard project duration.</p> <p><u>Global Postdoctoral Fellowships:</u> secondments cannot take place during the mandatory 12 month return period to the host organisation in a MS or AC. However, a secondment can take place at the start of the action, at the beneficiary, for a maximum of 3 months (to be included within the 1/3 maximum duration), <i>before</i> going to the associated partner for the outgoing phase.</p> <p>Note that <u>secondments</u> can be divided into several shorter periods.</p>	Additional period that takes place <i>after</i> the standard duration of the fellowship.
Mobility	Any country worldwide	MS or AC
Sector	Any sector	Non-academic sector only
Description in Part B-1	Yes. Secondments should be described in part B1 and the evaluators will assess their relevance and quality in the respective criterion.	Yes. Non-academic placements should be described in part B1 and the evaluators will assess their relevance and quality in the respective criterion.
Description in Part B-2	Secondment hosts must be listed in Tables 5.1 and 5.2 within part B template.	Non-academic placements hosts must be listed in Tables 5.1 and 5.2 within part B template.
Supporting Document in Part B-2	None	Yes. A letter of commitment is required.

Short Visits

Note that secondments and non-academic placements are to be distinguished from short visits. Short visits imply mobility to another location outside the physical premises of the beneficiary, including internationally. However, the work done there continues to be supervised directly by the supervisor of the host beneficiary. Short visits can only represent a small part of the project duration.

When a secondment or short visit to a TC takes place, the beneficiary shall ensure compliance with the applicable Horizon Europe ethical framework and the corresponding provisions of the Grant Agreement. **Short visits must not be encoded as participating organisations in the submission forms.**

4. ERA Fellowships

The ERA Fellowships (ERA-PF)¹⁷ aim at mobility and brain circulation in Widening Countries.¹⁸ The scheme is open to individual researchers of any nationality holding a PhD who wish to engage in R&I projects in a host institution located in a Widening Country coming from any country in the world.

The scheme will fund proposals submitted to the MSCA-2022-PF call with a beneficiary located in a Widening Country, which failed to score high enough to receive funding under this call. Only European Postdoctoral Fellowships can qualify for the ERA-PF call (Global Postdoctoral Fellowships are excluded). All eligibility and admissibility rules applicable to the MSCA-2022-PF call will apply.

Applicants can only be considered for this additional funding opportunity by ticking **"YES"** to the question *"Do you wish to participate to the ERA Postdoctoral Fellowships and thus increase your chances of being funded?"* in the application form.

Applicants who do not reply, or tick "No" to the above question, will not be considered for the ERA-PF call (but will be evaluated and ranked under the MSCA-PF call, if eligible).

The only implementation difference with MSCA-PF is that researchers supported by the ERA Fellowships will not formally be considered as MSCA fellows.

Host organisations from Widening Countries will be informed simultaneously about the results of the evaluation for both MSCA-PF and the ERA-PF call, i.e. all applicants

¹⁷ A budget of EUR 8 million has been earmarked under the [Work Programme](#) *"Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area"*.

¹⁸ As defined in Article 2(17) of Regulation (EU) 2021/695 establishing Horizon Europe and laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, from the Member States, those countries are Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, for the whole duration of the Programme; for associated countries, it means the list of eligible countries as defined based on an indicator and published in the Work Programme. Legal entities from outermost regions as defined in Article 349 TFUE shall be also fully eligible as coordinators under this component.

eligible for transfer to the ERA-PF call will receive a standard MSCA-PF evaluation result letter and an attached ERA-PF evaluation result letter. There will be a single centralised evaluation review procedure for both MSCA-PF and ERA-PF.

5. Euratom funding for the MSCA-PF call

A novelty under Horizon Europe is that MSCA-PF proposals in the following European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) domains of research will be eligible for funding:

- Improve and support nuclear safety, security, safeguards, radiation protection, safe spent fuel and radioactive waste management and decommissioning, including the safe and secure use of nuclear power and of non-power applications of ionizing radiation.
- Maintain and further develop expertise and competence in the nuclear field within the Community.
- Foster the development of fusion energy as a potential future energy source for electricity production and contribute to the implementation of the European fusion roadmap.
- Support the policy of the Union and its Member States on continuous improvement of nuclear safety, safeguards and security.

Applicants in these domains of research wishing to be considered for Euratom funding under MSCA-PF (either European Postdoctoral Fellowships or Global Postdoctoral Fellowships) **must indicate** this by ticking "**YES**" to the following question in the application form:

"Are the research and training activities proposed addressing topics related to nuclear sciences and technology, as outlined in the Guide for applicants for this call and the Euratom Research and Training Programme (ERTP)?"

and **ONLY IF** the additional **eligibility criteria** listed hereunder apply:

- The researcher must be a national or long-term resident (see definitions) of an EU Member State or Euratom Associated Country.¹⁹
- The beneficiary and (if applicable) the associated partner hosting the additional non-academic placement must be based in an EU Member State or Euratom Associated Country.

Ranking of proposals in the Euratom domains

The proposals will be ranked in the same scientific panel ranking lists as other proposals, although the funding will be provided by the Euratom programme.

¹⁹ For Euratom Associated Countries, please see the [Euratom Research and Training programme 2021-2022](#).

6. Instructions for Completing Parts A and B of the Proposal

A proposal consists of an administrative part (**Part A**, filled in online via the submission forms) and a narrative **part B** composed of two separate PDF files (Part B1 and Part B2), which must be uploaded as separate PDF files:

1. **Part B1**, containing a maximum of 10 (ten) A4-sized pages. Any excess pages (i.e. numerical page 11 and beyond) will not be available to the evaluators;
2. **Part B2**, with no strict page limit for A4-sized pages.

Part B1 is the core part of the proposal; it should contain the details of the proposed research and training activities along with the practical arrangements proposed to implement them.

Part B2 contains: the CV of the researcher, the capacity of the participating organization(s), additional information on ethics and security screening (in case there was not sufficient space in the dedicated sections in part A), and the letter(s) of commitment from associated partners for the host of the outgoing phase of Global Fellowships and/or non-academic placement, if applicable to the proposal.

The documents will be used by the independent evaluators to assess how well the proposal addresses the award criteria (see section 2.4 of the MSCA Work Programme). Only the highest scoring proposals will be selected for funding (within the limits of the available call budget).

Applicants must use the **Part B template available on the call page** on the Funding & Tenders Portal. Please follow all instructions in the template.

 **Templates are call specific – make sure you use the template for MSCA PF-2022.**

 **Abstracts in part A should not contain sensitive information, as they will be made publicly available if the project is retained for funding.**

7. Technical Aspects of Proposal Submission

Proposals must be submitted electronically using the European Commission's Online Submission Service accessible via the [Funding & Tenders Portal](#). You will need a stable internet connection for the submission process. Please verify your own computer's configuration against the [recommended system configuration](#).

We encourage you to submit your proposal as soon as possible. It remains possible to reopen, edit and resubmit your proposal as many times as required before the call deadline. Only the last submitted version will be evaluated. Prior to the call deadline,

it is strongly advised to re-download parts B-1 and B-2, to ensure the PDF files are correct, complete, and not corrupted.

Each participating entity in Horizon Europe (beneficiaries and associated partners) must have a Participant Identification Code (PIC) which identifies the institution(s) taking active part in the project and which must be included in Part A of the proposal. Please contact the relevant representative of each participating entity to be sure to use the correct PIC.

What if your submission failed due to a technical problem?

If you believe that the submission of your proposal was not successful due to a technical error **on the side of the European Commission**, you may lodge a complaint via the [IT Helpdesk](#), within four calendar days after the call deadline.

You should secure a PDF version of all the parts B and annexes of your proposal holding a time stamp (file attributes listing the date and time of creation and last modification) that is prior to the call deadline, as well as any proof of the alleged failure (e.g. screen shots). You may be requested by the IT Helpdesk to provide these items. Any information regarding the proposal will be treated in a strictly confidential manner.

You will receive an acknowledgement of receipt the same or next working day, and you will be notified about the outcome of the complaint within the timeframe indicated in the message.

If a complaint is upheld (i.e. the investigation has demonstrated technical issues on the European Commission side which prevented (re)submission of the proposal), the secured files provided to the IT helpdesk will be used for the evaluation. In the absence of such documents, the version present in the IT system will be evaluated.

8. Calculation of 8-years research experience in Postdoctoral Fellowships under Horizon Europe

A document and a self-assessment tool aiming to guide the applicants towards calculating the possible deductions of their 8 years Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) experience in research can be found on the REA website following this [link](#), under the Postdoctoral Fellowships section.

9. Frequently Asked Questions

An extensive list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to assist the applicant in how to complete properly parts A and B is available [here](#).

Scientific Misconduct and Research Integrity

Issues of scientific misconduct and research integrity are taken very seriously. In line with the Horizon Europe Rules for Participation, appropriate action such as termination of the Grant Agreement Preparation phase or, if the Grant Agreement has been signed, the implementation of liquidated damages and financial penalties, suspension of payments, recoveries and termination of the Grant Agreement, will be taken against any applicants/beneficiaries found to have misrepresented, fabricated or plagiarised any part of their proposal. The applicants will also be required to make a "Declaration on Honour" in Part A of the proposal.