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Determinazione. n. 75/2016

Selection procedure based on qualification and possible interview for the awarding of 9 (nine) research fellowships entitled:

“ASTRONOMY FELLOWSHIPS IN ITALY 2 call 2”

Category: 9 (nine) Incoming mobility fellowships of young researchers co-funded by Horizon 2020 Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions COFUND (in accordance with Italian Law 240/2010, Article 22)

THE DIRECTOR

- Having seen** The Statute of the Istituto Nazionale di Astrofisica (INAF), adopted by INAF Board on March 7th, 2011, and entered into force on May 1st, 2011;
- In accordance with** Italian Law n. 240, dated December 30th, 2010, Article 22;
- Having seen** INAF Regulations for the awarding of research fellowships approved by INAF Board on June 22, 2011, Resolution n. 06/11 and subsequent modifications and integrations;
- In accordance with** the Grant Agreement n. 664931, between the Research Executive Agency (REA), under the power delegated by the European Commission, and INAF for the implementation of the action “*Astronomy Fellowships in Italy 2*”, signed on April 13th, 2015;
- Having verified** the availability of necessary funds within INAF 2016 budget on finance on Ob.Fu. 1.05.02.10.05 “H2020: AstroFI 2”, CRA 1.14, cap. 1.01.01.01.009 “Assegni di ricerca”.

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Art. 1

Research fellowships

A selection based on qualifications, possibly integrated by an interview, is open to award 9 (nine) Incoming mobility fellowships, co-funded by Horizon 2020 Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions COFUND, under the action “*Astronomy Fellowships in Italy 2*” (hereinafter referred to as “*AstroFI 2*”), Grant Agreement n. 664931. Awarded researchers shall be considered as *Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellows*.



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Each applicant shall propose a research project related with one (or more in case of interdisciplinary projects) of the following INAF scientific research areas:

- 1) Galaxies and Cosmology
- 2) Stars, Stellar Population and Interstellar medium
- 3) Sun and Solar System
- 4) Relativistic and Particle Astrophysics
- 5) Advanced Technology and Instruments
- 6) Any other astrophysics subject (e.g.: exoplanets, astrobiology, etc.), relevant for INAF scientific activities.

Art. 2 Requirements

At the time of the deadline for submission of proposals, applicants shall fulfil the following requirements, on pain of exclusion, in order to participate in the selection:

a1) shall have a doctoral degree, plus a maximum of eight (8) years of full-time post-PhD research experience;

or, in the case of lack of PhD degree,

a2) shall have a minimum of four (4) years and a maximum of twelve (12) years of full-time equivalent research experience (including the period of research training), acquired after the degree formally necessary for the admission to a doctorate in the country where the degree was obtained or in the country where the fellowship is taking place;

b) shall be researchers who have not resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in Italy for more than twelve (12) months in the three (3) years immediately prior to the call deadline (short stays, e.g.: holidays, are not taken into account).

The Board of the Programme may request to the awarded fellows to provide documents in order to verify the accuracy of the declarations on requirements.

Art. 3 Application procedure

Applicants shall choose the most suitable INAF Research Centre (*Hosting Structure*) for carrying out their proposed research project and will have the possibility to indicate a scientific staff member of the Hosting Structure as contact point and supervisor of their project. In the absence of such indication, the successfully awarded fellows will meet the Director of the *Hosting Structure* to jointly identify a supervisor. In any case the indication of the supervisor will not have any impact on the evaluation.

If required, the fellows can conduct their research in more than one INAF Research Centre. This option could be foreseen in the application or be agreed between the fellow and supervisor during the preparation of the career development plan.

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The *Guide for Applicants*, containing all necessary information, is available on the Programme website (www.astrofit2.inaf.it).

The *Application* shall be written in English, dated, signed and submitted as one compressed (e.g: zipped) file, to be uploaded by means of the *AstroFit2* website (www.astrofit2.inaf.it), and shall include the following documents:

1. *Application form*, compiled in all its sections, using the template;
2. copy of a valid identity document (ID card or Passport);
3. *Letter of Commitment* signed by the Director of the selected INAF Research Centre, that will ensure the appropriate conditions (office, laboratory space, equipment etc) for the correct development of the proposed project, together with the necessary administrative support, using the template;

The *Application* shall be integrated by at least two *Letters of Reference*, dated, signed, and e-mailed to astrofit@inaf.it by experts in the scientific research areas indicated in article 1. *Letters of Reference* without signature or delivered after the deadline will not be considered. The subject of the email shall contain the name of the applicant.

Templates of *Application Form* and *Letter of Commitment* are available on the *AstroFit 2* website (www.astrofit2.inaf.it).

The *Application* shall be submitted and the *Letters of Reference* be received before the deadline of July, the 5th 2016, at 12.00 am (CET). The online submission shall not be available after the deadline and the applicant shall not be allowed to send it by email, therefore late submissions will not be considered.

After the deadline, INAF will perform the eligibility check. Proposals not meeting the requirements (see Art. 2) will not undergo evaluation. The rejection due to ineligibility will be promptly communicated to the applicants, explaining the reasons. The applicant can submit a request for redress within 20 days from the receipt of the communication.

INAF accepts no responsibility for lost applications or documents where this is due to the applicant having provided incorrect contact details or having failed or delayed in notifying changes to these details.

Art. 4

Ineligibility and incompatibility with other funding

Full professors, associate professors and “*ricercatori*” in Italian universities and employees of Italian research public institutions are all excluded from entering the competition.

The grant cannot be held at the same time with attendance at academic courses as those that formally give access to a doctorate, as well as with attendance at PhD courses with fellowship.

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The grant cannot be held together with other fellowships of whatever kind, except those awarded with the aim of integrating the training or research activity of the fellowship holder through a period spent abroad.

Aggregation of income from working activities, also part-time, carried out continuously is not accepted.

When formally accepting the grant, the successful candidate will issue a formal declaration of absence of inadmissible cumulating of grants/fellowships.

Art. 5

Duration of the Research fellowship

The fellow shall devote himself/herself full time to the project for a period of thirty six (36) months. The fellow, however, may propose to suspend part, or all, of the project due to personal, family (including parental leave) or professional reasons. The request of suspension by the fellow must be accompanied by the necessary justifications.

The Board of the Programme can approve the request if duly justified, and provided that the total duration of the project does not overcome the duration of the grant agreement and suspension is shorter than six (6) months.

Art. 6

Hosting Structure

The fellow shall carry out the research in one of the following INAF Research Centres (to be chosen in the *Application*):

- 1) Istituto di Astrofisica e Planetologia Spaziali – Roma,
- 2) Istituto di Astrofisica Spaziale e Fisica Cosmica di Bologna,
- 3) Istituto di Astrofisica Spaziale e Fisica Cosmica di Milano,
- 4) Istituto di Astrofisica Spaziale e Fisica Cosmica di Palermo,
- 5) Istituto di Radioastronomia - Bologna
- 6) Osservatorio Astrofisico di Arcetri,
- 7) Osservatorio Astrofisico di Catania,
- 8) Osservatorio Astrofisico di Torino,
- 9) Osservatorio Astronomico di Bologna,
- 10) Osservatorio Astronomico di Brera,
- 11) Osservatorio Astronomico di Cagliari,
- 12) Osservatorio Astronomico di Capodimonte,
- 13) Osservatorio Astronomico di Padova,
- 14) Osservatorio Astronomico di Palermo,
- 15) Osservatorio Astronomico di Roma,
- 16) Osservatorio Astronomico di Teramo,
- 17) Osservatorio Astronomico di Trieste.

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Art. 7
Funding per fellowship

Living allowance:

- the contract for the fellows shall specify a yearly reference rate for monthly living allowances of forty five thousand (45.000) EUR/year. This amount, paid in different monthly installments, includes the provisions for all compulsory deductions under national applicable legislation and social charges.

Travel allowance:

- fellows are entitled to three (3) travel allowances, each one of one thousand five hundred (1500) EUR/year and it is subject to national applicable deductions, irrespective of the actual travel costs incurred by the researcher. The first travel allowance shall be paid first upon taking up appointment and the following two after one and two years, respectively. The travel allowance shall be proportionally reduced if the fellows works for a period lower than twelve (12) months.

Research cost contribution:

- the hosting INAF Research Centre will receive a contribution to the research and training expenses of the fellow. This monthly amount of five hundred (500) EUR will be used for any expense needed to carry out the project and to contribute at the researcher career development.

Accident and health insurance:

- it will be paid by INAF in favour of the fellow, to provide coverage for health diseases, work accidents, occupational diseases and invalidity.

During the period of obligatory maternity leave the allowance paid by INPS (Italian National Institute for Social Security) is supplemented by INAF up to the total amount of the grant.

Art. 8
Selection Committee and selection procedure

The Selection Committee shall be composed by 7 members including the Chair.

The Selection Committee shall be appointed according to the following criteria:

- internationally recognized experience in astrophysics related fields;
- significant experience in international research projects in astrophysics related fields;
- high level and wide range of competencies in astrophysics;
- gender balance;
- at least two members non-resident in Italy.

The Selection Committee shall be nominated by the INAF President, after receiving indications from the Programme Board. Its composition will take into account the applications received and the INAF



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scientific areas chosen by the candidates, assuring that each proposal could be evaluated by experts and avoiding any possible conflict of interest. Conflicts of interests may include: a) family or other close relationship, b) previous close collaboration with the candidate; c) a direct involvement on the specific proposal.

Each submitted project shall be evaluated by the Selection Committee.

The Selection Committee components shall:

- perform evaluations on a personal basis, not as representatives of their employer, their country or any other entity;
- be independent, impartial and objective, and behave throughout in a professional manner;
- sign an appointment letter including a declaration on confidentiality and absence of conflict of interests before beginning their work;
- adhere to confidentiality rules at all time: before, during and after the evaluation;

The Selection Committee components shall not, under any circumstance, attempt to contact an applicant on his/her own account, either during the evaluation or afterwards.

The selection procedure will be the following:

- Each Selection Committee member shall access all documents submitted by the applicants, by means of a restricted access web site;
- Remote Evaluation: each submitted project shall be assessed independently by the Selection Committee members, free from conflicts, who will give a preliminary grade for each of the evaluation criteria, accompanied by a short report;
- Consensus Meeting: the Selection Committee will meet to discuss the evaluations for each proposal in order to: a) reach a common view by consensus; b) produce an initial ranked list;
- Candidate Interview: should a disagreement among the individual scores or the impossibility to reach a common view arise, the interested candidate will be invited for an interview (either in person or via teleconference); at the interview, all Selection Committee members will be present;
- Final Decision: a written evaluation for each candidate will be prepared and a final complete ranked list will be produced, that will include all the ranked candidates who received a grade above the threshold.

The fellowships will be offered to the candidates with the highest grades. In case of withdraw, the position will be offered to the next in the final qualified ranked list.

Should an applicant withdraw his/her application before the Consensus Meeting, the application will not be evaluated.

Considering the bottom-up approach of AstroFIt 2, the first ranked proposals will be accepted regardless of the thematic area or the requested Hosting Structure.

Returning after a career break will be considered as higher priority in case of even score.



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Criteria and method of judging merit

Scientific and technological (S&T) quality of the proposed project as well as the curriculum of the applicant and the content of the reference letters will be the main aspects to be evaluated, as indicated in the following table:

S&T Quality Weighting: 60%	Researcher CV Weighting: 40%
Scientific and/or technological quality, including originality and innovative nature of the proposed project	Research experience in public and/or private institutions
Timeliness and relevance of the project	Previous/present participation to scientific programmes/collaborations, and associated role/level, also including programme management capability
Integration level of the proposed project with the main activities of the hosting INAF Research Centre	Achieved results, including publications, patents, invited talks at international meeting, international awards
Research methodology	Reference letters
Impact of the proposed project on the scientific development of the proponent	

Each of the evaluation criteria will be initially scored out of 10, with a threshold of 6. The S&T Quality criterion will be weighted 60/100 and Researcher criterion 40/100. An overall threshold of 70/100 will be applied to all proposals. Proposals failing to meet the overall thresholds will be excluded from the final qualified ranked list.

The Selection Committee will take into account the career breaks occurred for justified reasons, such as civil or military service, parenthood, or family care and/or unconventional research career paths, especially in the case of women.

Research experience and results obtained by the applicant will be evaluated by the Selection Committee referring to the time actually spent in the research activities.

The selection procedure will be concluded, with the publication of the final approved ranked list on the *AstroFIt 2* website, not later than four (4) months from the deadline for applications (see Art. 3).

Should an awarded *AstroFIt 2* fellow resign after the beginning of the fellowship, the following candidate in the ranked list may be awarded the fellowship on the condition that he/she may be appointed for at least twelve (12) months.



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Redress procedure

Applicants may submit the redress procedure:

- after the communication on his/her application ineligibility;

or

- after reception of the feedback on the outcome of the evaluation.

The redress procedure is not meant to call into question the scientific judgment made by the Selection Committee; it will look into procedural shortcomings and/or factual errors. The request for redress will be raised within twenty (20) days from receiving the related communication.

The Board of the Programme:

- will examine all such complaints and will not itself evaluate the proposal;
- may recommend the evaluation or the re-evaluation of the proposal.

A reply will be sent to the complainants not later than one (1) month after the deadline for redress request.

Art. 9

Awarding of the fellowship

Within ten (10) days from the *Final decision* a notification will be sent to all applicants, containing the results of the evaluation of their project, together with an individual evaluation report.

The awardees must declare their acceptance within forty five (45) days from the notification. In case of refusal or missing formal acceptance, the grant can be awarded to the following candidate in the ranking list.

The declaration of acceptance will also state that the selected candidate is not subject to any of the exclusion conditions listed in article 4 of this call.

INAF will appoint the awarded AstroFIt 2 fellows by means of an “Assegno di Ricerca” position (Italian Law 20 December 2010, n. 240, Art. 22). A contract will be signed between the Director of the Hosting Structure and the fellow.

Art. 10

Starting date and fellowship obligations

Expected starting date of the fellowship will be within six (6) months from the award of the fellowship (on the 1st day of the month). If the candidate does not sign the contract within this period, he/she will surrender his/her entitlement to the research fellowship.

Under no circumstances the signing of the contract represents a subordinate employment relationship or ensures any rights to access to permanent INAF or non permanent INAF staff positions.



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The holder of the *AstroFIt 2* fellowship:

- shall prepare a *Career Development Plan* with the help of her/his supervisor. A copy will be sent to the Board of the Programme for any suggestions. The *Career Development Plan*, to be considered a live document that will be verified and eventually updated during the fellowship, shall include:

- 1) the acquisition of scientific skills needed for realizing the scientific objectives of the proposed Programme;
- 2) the acquisition of technical and scientific skills of general use in astrophysics and in other scientific fields;
- 3) training in non-scientific areas.

The activities of point 1) will depend on the specific scientific project of the fellow and may include the study or development of theoretical models, instrumentation, experimental set-up, data analysis, etc.

Point 2) is more general and may include some practice in using software typically adopted in astrophysics and in scientific context, the fellows may study specific programming language, develop their ability in statistical analysis, mathematical techniques, etc.

Finally, the activities in 3) may include educational skills. The fellows may collaborate with the educational activities already ongoing at the host structure. They may learn to manage a project of small/medium size, to prepare reports, to write new proposals both national and European.

The Board of the Programme can suggest training in non-scientific skills and INAF is entitled to organize those activities for the fellows;

- shall be fully integrated in the activities of the INAF Hosting structure. He/she will have the possibility to participate to seminars or conferences organized by the host, and is expected to give one or more seminars illustrating his/her scientific activities. He/she will have the opportunity to join national/international projects in which the host is involved, participating to large projects within collaborations that are common in astrophysics. If interested, he/she may also collaborate on voluntary basis, as the other researchers in the host structures, on educational and didactical activities;
- shall submit three (3) scientific reports, two (2) intermediate reports at the end of the first and second year of activity and a final report within one (1) month after the conclusion of their fellowship. The scientific reports must be countersigned by the Director of the structure and the local scientific supervisor.

In these reports, each fellow will present the achieved results, comparing them with the proposed project and with what foreseen the *Career Development Plan*. The reports will include specific and general scientific activities, as well as non-scientific training activities, and in case of needs will be used to adjust the remaining activity plan.

At the end of the fellowship each fellow will be asked to answer to a brief questionnaire on the implementation of the Programme that will be used to improve it;

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- shall have the possibility to present her/his work to the related scientific community during the *AstroFit 2* annual meetings;
- has complete freedom in choosing new collaboration. During the appointment the fellow will be encouraged and helped to maintain his/her previous collaborations and to start new ones. It will be possible for the fellow to establish a positive feedback/exchange of knowledge and experience between the fellow and the INAF Hosting Structure and vice versa;
- shall acknowledge the European Union support of Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions in publications, conference papers, presentations and posters in connection with his/her project. Unless the Agency requests or agrees otherwise or unless it is impossible, any dissemination of results (in any form, including electronic) shall:
 - (a) display the EU emblem and
 - (b) include 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 n. 664931".
- may contact the Programme Board for any question or problem relevant to her/his fellowships. Any communication addressed to the staff of the Programme, included the Board, must be sent to astrofit@inaf.it;
- is required to send a written note in case of withdrawal, with at least 30 days notice, otherwise INAF is entitled to retain or request the reimbursement of the salary amount corresponding to the notice time-span he/she has failed to send.

Art. 11 **Applicable regulation**

INAF shall abide by provisions in force promoting equal opportunities for women and men, non-discrimination and respect of privacy in processing personal data.
 For what not explicitly mentioned in this announcement, INAF shall act in compliance with the regulations in force concerning Italian public selection procedures, when applicable by analogy.

Bologna, 19th May 2016

The Director
Giuseppe Malaguti

