

Individual Fellowships Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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General Aspects¹

Q1: What are the IF opportunities for SMEs and companies?

A: SMEs and other companies can apply to host the fellowship and thus benefit from the services and valuable experience of a highly talented, fully funded researcher for at least a year. In addition, IFs, which are often carried out at academic institutions, may include secondments of a limited duration to other organisations in a Member State or Associated Country if this increases the impact of the project on European science, competitiveness, innovation capacity, or society. For many research fields this may imply undertaking a secondment to a company, fully funded by the IF grant. Planned secondment(s) must be stated in the research proposal (in particular, the sector of the organisation, the timing and duration of the secondment) but the precise organisation can be chosen at a later stage.

Q2: Can the researcher undertake the outgoing phase of Global Fellowships in any third country?

A: In principle yes, however some entities from certain third countries are covered by Council sanctions (restrictive measures) in place and might not be eligible to participate in EU programmes. Please see the consolidated list of persons, groups and entities subject to EU financial sanctions, available at http://eeas.europa.eu/cfsp/sanctions/consol-list_en.htm.

Q3: I am presenting an individual global fellowship (IF-GF). I would like to spend the 20% of the outgoing phase in another institution in the same Third Country than my partner organisation. Is it possible? Do I need to declare it in the part A of the proposal? Is it sufficient to declare it only in part B of the proposal?

A: For a Global Fellowship, it is only possible to add an optional secondment of up to 6 months to an organisation in Europe (Member States or Associated Countries).

However, Fellows benefiting from a Global Fellowship may go on short visits within third countries.

Please take note of the provisions of the Guide for Applicants for MSCA (IF) (page 13-14) http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/doc/call/h2020/h2020-msca-if-2015/1645199-guide_for_applicants_if_2015_en.pdf which provides clear indications on the definition of "short visits" : in particular, the aim of a short visit is simply to gather data and information. A short visit has a limited impact on the project and does not need to be planned before (it could be spontaneous). Short visits shall represent only a balanced part of the project.

For these reasons, it would appear that planning a regular 20% FTE to carry-out your project in another institution than your partner organisation in the same Third Country would not meet the definition of a "short visit". Please keep in my mind also that during the evaluation of proposals, expert evaluators will assess the letter of commitment of your partner organisation included under Part B which should demonstrate its real and active participation in the proposed action and its precise role.

During the implementation phase of a project, the REA will assess whether a visit is reasonable in terms of

¹ Please also refer to the IF [Guide for Applicants](#).

activity and duration.

Short visits, when they comply with the definition of the Guide, may be indicated under Part B.

Eligibility

Q4: Can researchers of any nationality participate in IF?

A: Researchers of any nationality can participate in IF. However, the Global Fellowships and the Reintegration Panel of the European Fellowships are restricted to nationals or long-term residents of Member States or Associated Countries. Long-term residents are defined as researchers who spent a period of full-time research activity of at least five consecutive years (without breaks in research) in one or more Member States or Associated Countries.

In addition, it should be noted that there are EU sanctions (restrictive measures) in place which can prohibit the participation of and/or provision of technical training to entities or individuals resident in certain countries in specific research fields. The beneficiaries are under an obligation to ensure compliance with these restrictive measures; an overview thereof can be found under http://eeas.europa.eu/cfsp/sanctions/docs/measures_en.pdf.

Q5: I have not yet obtained my PhD. How is the four years of full-time equivalent research experience calculated?

A: Experience is calculated from the "...date when a researcher obtained the degree which would formally entitle him or her to embark on a doctorate..." This may vary from country to country.

Only postgraduate research experience is relevant for this purpose. Other professional activities are not taken into account, no matter when these took place.

Q6: Is a Medical Doctor (MD) degree equivalent to a PhD?

A: In the context of Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions, Medical Doctor (MD) studies are not taken as equivalent to PhD studies. For MDs, the requirement of 4 years of full-time research experience applies.

Q7: I have been living in country A (Member State) for approximately more than one year. Am I eligible for a European Fellowship there?

A: No you would not be eligible for an IF in country A. The application of the eligibility criteria is very strict and includes the compliance with the mobility rule. Two elements make up the mobility rule:

- the place of residence and
- the place of carrying out one main activity.

As a result, if you have been residing and carrying out your main activity in country A for more than 12 months during the last three years you would not be eligible for an IF in this country.

Q8: I have already participated in a project funded under FP6 or FP7. Am I eligible to participate in the Individual Fellowship action funded under H2020?

A: Yes, if you fulfil the eligibility conditions for the Individual Fellowship. In case you have already benefited from a previous Marie Curie action, in your proposal you must explain the added value of your research activity under the new action.

But please take note also that you cannot benefit from two MSC grants at the same time and that the same project cannot benefit twice from different European funding programmes.

Beneficiaries and Partner Organisations

Q9: Can a fellow have multiple supervisors within the same host organisation?

A: No. There should be only one supervisor per host organisation, who is named in the table 'List of Participants' in Part B of the proposal. European Fellowships of course only have one host organisation, while Global Fellowships have two (one of them being in a third country).

The role of the supervisor(s) is to integrate the researcher properly within his/her organisation in order that all parties gain the maximum knowledge and skills from the fellowship. This includes ensuring that the foreseen training-through-research takes place, as well as providing support and guidance for the personal and professional development of the fellow.

Q10: Can a supervisor have multiple fellows awarded with the Individual Fellowship within the same host organisation?

A: For Individual Fellowships, the Supervisor may supervise two or more fellows in the same host organisation, provided that the obligations of the beneficiary institution stipulated in the H2020 Model Grant Agreement for MSC IF are respected. In particular, the beneficiary must ensure that the researcher is adequately supervised (see Article 31.1.h of the MGA).

The Guide for Applicants for MSCA (IF)

http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/doc/call/h2020/h2020-msca-if-2015/1645199-guide_for_applicants_if_2015_en.pdf

also states that the Experienced Researcher should be well integrated within the hosting organisation(s) in order that all parties gain the maximum knowledge and skills from the fellowship. This includes ensuring that the foreseen training-through-research takes place.

The European Charter for Researchers quoted in the Guide underlines the availability of mentors involved in providing support and guidance for the personal and professional development of researchers, thus motivating them and contributing to reducing any insecurity in their professional future.

Q11: What is the difference between International Organisations and International European Interest Organisations?

A: An International Organisation is defined² as an inter-governmental organisation other than the European Union, which has legal personality under public international law. Any specialised agency set up by such international organisations is also considered an 'International Organisation'.

International European Interest Organisations on the other hand are defined³ as International Organisations, the majority of whose members are EU Member States or Associated Countries, and whose principal objective is to promote scientific and technological cooperation in Europe.

Q12: Must an International European Interest Organisation be located in a Member State or Associated Country?

A: No. As stated in the preceding answer, the H2020 Rules for Participation define International European Interest Organisations not on the basis of their location, but on their membership and principal objective.

Q13: What is the status of Switzerland under this Call?

A: Following the conclusion of the International Agreement associating Switzerland to parts of Horizon 2020 in 2015, Switzerland participates from 15 September 2014 with an associated country status in actions that include the topics of this call.

For more information see: [Information on Swiss participation in Horizon 2020](#).

Proposal

Q14: Which scientific panel should I choose for my proposal? Does it have to be in the field of my highest degree diploma?

A: Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions have a bottom-up approach, meaning that proposals from all scientific areas (except those covered under [Annex I of the EURATOM Treaty](#)) can be funded. Your proposal should be submitted to one of the 8 main scientific areas defined in the IF Guide for Applicants in which your proposal best fits.

It is not compulsory to choose the same field as your PhD. For example, if you have a PhD in chemistry and your proposal is mainly focusing on bio-chemistry you can freely choose to submit your proposal in CHE (chemistry) or LIF (life sciences). The List of descriptors published on the IF call page of the Participant Portal, in which descriptors are associated to a scientific area, can help with your choice.

Q15: I think I am eligible for both panels, i.e. the standard EF and CAR (or Standard EF and RI) under the EF. Which panel should I choose?

² [Unique Registration Facility User's Guide \(version 5 of 7 March 2014\)](#)

³ http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/legal_basis/rules_participation/h2020-rules-participation_en.pdf

A: It is not possible to advice on such choice, and in either case the proposal will be reviewed by the most appropriate expert evaluators. However, bear in mind that the mobility rule applied to each of these options is different.

Q16: Will all sections of the proposal Part B be evaluated, or only those sections to which the page limit is applied (sections 1-3: Excellence, Impact, and Implementation)?

A: All sections of the proposal form part of the evaluation. The 10-page limit is applied to sections 1 to 3 combined in order not to disadvantage, for example, researchers with more experience and hence a longer CV with reduced space to write sections 1 to 3.

Q17: Why should a researcher not submit the proposal on his/her own?

A: This is because the legal responsibility lies with the host organisation in a Member State or Associated Country (future beneficiary) and only the supervisor, appointed by this organisation, can act on its behalf until the signature of the Grant Agreement. As such, only the supervisor should press the submit button and take any other actions in the name of the organisation (e.g. initiate the "review process" that for Horizon 2020 replaces the redress procedure) until the Grant Agreement is signed.

The electronic submission system will still however allow the researcher to submit the proposal. He/she should consider the implications of this carefully before doing so.

Q18: How are researchers compared during evaluations, in particular taking into account the different level of experience of researchers as stated in their CV (e.g. a researcher with more years of experience will have more publications etc.)?

A: As stated in the [Guide for Applicants](#) (page 36 – reproduced below), the assessment of the researcher is a key element of the Excellence award criterion. The text below shows how less experienced researchers are treated fairly:

1.4 Capacity of the researcher to reach and re-enforce a position of professional maturity in research

Please keep in mind that the fellowships will be awarded to the most talented researchers as shown by the proposed research and their track record (Curriculum Vitae, section 4), in relation to their level of experience.

However, the CV may also be relevant for other aspects of the evaluation. For example, again under Excellence, the Guide for Applicants (page 35 – reproduced below) refers to host organisations possibly benefitting from the existing knowledge of the fellow:

1.2 Clarity and quality of transfer of knowledge/training for the development of the researcher in light of the research objectives

Outline how a two way transfer of knowledge will occur between the researcher and the host institution, in view of their future development and past experience: (please see Section 5.2 of this Guide):

- Explain how the Experienced Researcher will gain new knowledge during the fellowship at the hosting organisation(s)*
- Outline the previously acquired knowledge and skills that the researcher will transfer to the host organisation.*

For Global Fellowships explain how the newly acquired skills and knowledge in the Third Country will be transferred back to the host institution in Europe during the incoming phase."

Q19: Can I re-submit a proposal that was rejected under the previous MSCA-IF-2014 Call?

A: Yes you are allowed to re-submit a proposal that was rejected under the MSCA-IF-2014 Call. Please note that the procedure that will be followed to evaluate your proposal is described in the [Grants Manual - Section on: Proposal submission and evaluation](#) (page 15) which states that "if the work programme topics and criteria were comparable, the moderator of the consensus group may give a copy of the previous Evaluation Summary Report to the experts".

Project Implementation

Q20: Is the fellowship portable so that the fellow can change host organisation during the action?

A: The rules for the transfer of a grant to a new beneficiary are indicated in the MSC [IF Model Grant Agreement](#), Article 56a. The key point is that the request to transfer the research training activities can only be made by the beneficiary of the grant, meaning the host organisation located in a Member State or Associated Country. To request the transfer there must be serious reasons affecting the capacity of the beneficiary to implement the action.

Q21: Can the researcher during an IF remain under his/her existing contract at the host institution?

A: If the fellow is already employed at the host institution at the start of the fellowship, an additional contract is not required provided that all of the conditions of the Grant Agreement are respected. These include in particular remuneration amounts, social security coverage, employment under a full-time regime and that the researcher must be fully dedicated to the action. Furthermore, please note in particular Article 32.1 of the MSC [IF Model Grant Agreement](#) which requires the contract to state *inter alia* the start date and duration of the action.

Q22: Can EU funds be transferred to a third country, including the funding intended to cover indirect costs?

A: The EU contribution must be directly managed by the host organisation established in a Member State or Associated Country (beneficiary of the grant). However, in the case of the Global Fellowships and under the responsibility of the beneficiary, parts of the EU contribution can be transferred to the host organisation in a third country (partner organisation). It is highly encouraged to define these financial arrangements in a partnership agreement according to the needs of the project.

Arrangements between the beneficiary and the partner organisation in a third country are an internal matter for the partnership. However, in case of an audit the beneficiary will need to demonstrate that the researcher was working on the action and that the expected allowances (living, mobility and family allowances) were fully paid to him/her. Details on management or indirect costs will not be requested.

Q23: I would need additional funding for personnel and lab equipment not covered by the MSCA. Can I apply for another grant in that respect?

A: Yes. The MSCA scheme does not prevent the host institution from receiving this kind of extra funding as long as the same costs are not reimbursed by both grants and the researcher does not receive (for activities carried out in the frame of the action) other incomes than those received from the beneficiary.

Q24: I have already accepted external funding for the same research/costs. Can I dedicate part of the MSC IF grant as a top-up to my current grant?

A: No, it is not possible because the other grant would generate a profit under the MSC-Individual Fellowship action. According to the [Financial Regulation \(Article 125\)](#), grants shall not have the purpose or effect of producing a profit within the framework of the action (no profit principle). The MSCA Grant Agreement provisions clearly state that the fellow should be employed full-time and be working exclusively for the action.

Q25: I have been awarded a permanent academic position within an organisation which is not the host institution. Can I nevertheless participate in IF?

A: No, you cannot. According to [Article 32 of the GA](#) you must work exclusively on the action and cannot receive, for the activities carried out in the frame of the action, other incomes than those received from the beneficiary.

Q26: I am already working and will take an unpaid sabbatical leave from my current organisation for the duration of the MSCA fellowship. Can I participate in IF?

A: Yes, according to [Article 32 of the GA](#) you can. As long as you sign an employment contract with the host institution, work exclusively on the action and do not receive, for the activities carried out in the frame of the action, other incomes than those received from the beneficiary.

Q27: Is it possible to add a Third Party in the MSC IF GA for the management of the MSC funding?

A: No, there is no option for third parties in the MSC IF core Grant Agreement and information on third parties cannot be added in the Annex I. However, if the beneficiary wants to use its administrative/financial foundation (created, owned and

controlled by the beneficiary) for the management of the MSC grant on behalf of the beneficiary, this is still possible by providing in the Grant Agreement ([Article 21.8](#)) the bank account number of the foundation. The funds will be transferred directly to the latter.

Please note that in such a situation, the beneficiary still has to directly hire the researcher and remains the sole responsible for the implementation of the action.

Q28: My host institution receives an operating grant in the framework of another EU funding programme. Is there an impact on the MSCA grant?

A: Yes, indirect costs are already reimbursed by the operating grant so the budget of the IF action must be reduced accordingly in order to avoid double funding of indirect costs.