Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions – COFUND Implementation

21 November 2017,
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UKRO National Contact Points

• Advice on the European Research Council and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions

• Websites
  – www.ukro.ac.uk/erc
  – www.ukro.ac.uk/mariecurie

• Helpdesk
  – erc-uk@bbsrc.ac.uk; Phone: 0032 2289 6121
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• Funded by Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy
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Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions

- Operates on a ‘bottom-up’ basis
- For any research and innovation ideas (basic research; market take-up)
- **Mobility** (cross-border and cross-sector) is a key requirement
- Enhance skills of **people behind research and innovation**
- Strong participation across sectors
- Dissemination and **public engagement** - public outreach
- Gender balance – equal opportunities in the research content
COFUND

• “Aims at stimulating regional, national or international programmes to foster excellence in researchers’ training, mobility and career development, spreading the best practices of MSCA”

• Supports new or existing programmes for international, intersectoral and interdisciplinary research training and transnational and cross-sector mobility of researchers

• Two streams

  Doctoral programmes

  Fellowship programmes
## COFUND Modes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Doctoral programmes</th>
<th>Fellowship programmes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Supports ESRs</td>
<td>• Supports ERs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Doctoral enrolment mandatory</td>
<td>• Not open to permanent employees of the host organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Training and secondment opportunities with partners, particularly the non-academic sector will be advantageous</td>
<td>• Regular selection rounds allowing fair competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Cross-sectoral mobility encouraged</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Competitive proposals will offer broad and flexible Fellowships to the selected researchers giving them freedom to define their own research and training project.
COFUND – Key Features

- Standard ‘unit costs’ - fixed amounts per researcher /year
- MSCA contribution to COFUND only to be used as contribution to the management of the programme and to the living allowance of the researchers
- Other costs (research costs, travel and mobility allowances, overheads) to be funded from institution’s own resources or other EU programmes
- Maximum EU contribution to single legal entity per call = **EUR 10M**
- Must comply with the MSCA mobility rule
- Programmes of **36-60 months**
- All researchers should be covered by full social security
- Compliance with the Charter and Code
COFUND – Funding Model

- EU contribution to living allowance for contracts with full social security:
  - Early stage researchers (ESR): € 1935 per person-month
  - Experienced researchers (ER): € 2740 per person-month

- EU contribution to management costs: € 325 per person-month

- Minimum amounts for monthly gross remuneration: living + mobility allowances:
  - ESR: € 2709
  - ER: € 3826

- Other cost items may be funded through other resources (including ESIF funds)

Example (Fellowship programme – ER)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost item</th>
<th>Examples of programme costs [€ per person-month]</th>
<th>EU contribution [€ per person-month]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Living allowance</td>
<td>e.g. 4800</td>
<td>2740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility allowance</td>
<td>e.g. 500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research costs</td>
<td>e.g. 500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management costs</td>
<td>e.g. 600</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect costs</td>
<td>e.g. 600</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>e.g. 7000</td>
<td>3065</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Commission contributions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme</th>
<th>Living allowance*</th>
<th>Mobility allowance</th>
<th>Family allowance</th>
<th>Research, training and networking costs</th>
<th>Management and overheads</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ITN</td>
<td>3270</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1800</td>
<td>1200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IF</td>
<td>4880</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RISE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1800</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COFUND</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>ERs</td>
<td>2740</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- * A correction co-efficient will apply to these costs, e.g. UK 139.83% (see MSCA Work Programme table 4)

- For COFUND: Unit costs are subject to a co-funding rate of 50% as established in the grant agreement. Unit costs are reduced by 50% in case researchers are recruited under fixed-amount fellowships.
MSCA projects

http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess

http://cordis.europa.eu
Useful Links

• UKRO Subscriber factsheet on Marie Curie Actions
  https://www.ukro.ac.uk/subscriber/Factsheets/factsheet_msca.pdf

• Commission’s Marie Curie Actions websites
  ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions and
  ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/h2020-section/marie-
  sklodowska-curie-actions

• UK NCP Helpdesk
  Email: mariecurie-uk@bbsrc.ac.uk
  Phone: + 32 2 230 0318
  Website: www.ukro.ac.uk/mariecurie
Audits - how selected

• Selection of Beneficiaries
• Randomly selected by Commission's central audit service or
• Top-Beneficiary or
• Risky cases, leads from "the outside", OLAF or
• REA operational services (e.g. issues, irregularities etc.).
Audits

• Consequences for audits
  – Focus on events triggering the reimbursements of flat rates;
  – Controls of eligibility conditions of work and promotion of the action.
Audit documentation:

• Payroll and HR dpt.:
  – a) Payslips
  – b) CV's (ER or ESR)
  – c) Employment contracts (signed and original)
  – d) bank statements

• Other dpt.:
  – Lab book, attendance list, conference abstract, library records, travel expenses, diplomas, publications...
Audits

• Key controls
  – Full time / Part time? (financial impact)
  – Required work experience and mobility rules of candidates: not have resided in the country of the host organisation for more than 12 months in the 3 years immediately prior the reference date (exception in the Annex 1);
  – Financial Agreements: contracts and payments made to the researcher;
  – Evidence of the presence of the fellows: (Ingoing / Outgoing)
Some recurring findings of Cofund audits (FP7)

- With financial impact:
- Adjustments in fellowship months, due to clerical errors, early terminations or delays not taken into account,
- Fellow worked not full time,
- Fellow showing to be elsewhere instead of at the premises,...
- Costs not claimed for some fellows
- Costs claimed, but fellows never started;
- Etc.

Source: European Commission
Maximum EU Financial Contribution

• **Recorded in the Grant Agreement**
  – Article 5.1. Maximum grant amount = Max EU contribution
  – Article 5.2 Form of grant, reimbursement rate and form of costs

• The grant reimburses 50% of the action’s eligible costs (see Annex 2).
  – Article 5.3. Final grant amount: depends on the actual extent to which the action is implemented in accordance with the Grant Agreement’s terms and conditions.
Eligibility of costs (1)

• Based on unit costs – predefined in the MSCA WP,

• Commission Decision No C(2013)8194:
  – Costs for researchers (‘living allowance’)
    • ESR: 3710 EUR (50% co-funding rate 1855 EUR)
    • ER: 5250 EUR (50% co-funding rate 2625 EUR)
  – Management costs: 650 EUR (50% co-funding rate 325 EUR)

• Fixed amounts that must be multiplied by the number of months the recruited researchers spent on research training activities (‘person months’).
Eligibility of costs (2)

• General conditions (article 6):
  – the units must be actually used or produced in the period set out in Article 3 (duration of the grant).
  – the units must be necessary for implementing the action or produced by it, and the number of units must be identifiable and verifiable, in particular supported by records and documentation (see Article 18).

• Specific conditions (article 6 and 15):
  – type of programme; ESR/ER; selection procedure.
  – minimum renumeration threshold: ESR - 2597 EUR; ER – 3675 EUR.
Example of budget:

In this example, the amount proposed for [living allowance + mobility allowance] for ER complies with the minimum requirement: [€ 4800 + € 500 = € 5300] > € 3675

As a reminder, required minimum amounts:
ER: € 3675
ESR: € 2597

Other cost items than the living allowance and the management costs must be funded through other resources (including ESIF funds)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost item</th>
<th>Total cost [€ per person-month]</th>
<th>EU contribution [€ per person-month]</th>
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<tr>
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<td>500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research costs</td>
<td>500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management costs</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect costs</td>
<td>600</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7000</td>
<td>2950</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: European Commission
Payments lifecycle

1. Pre-financing
   Includes Guarantee Fund payment

2. One or more Interim Payment(s)
   At time of periodic report(s)

3. Payment of balance
   Includes return of the Guarantee Fund
1. Pre-financing

- **Article 21.2 of the Grant Agreement**
- Amount of pre-financing – 1 payment
- Payment date: within 30 days, either from the entry into force of the GA or from 10 days before the starting date of the action, whichever is the latest.
  - Amount for the Guarantee Fund: 5% of the maximum grant amount
  - Amount for call 2016: 55%
- **Pre-financing owned by EC until the payment of balance**
Payment Lifecycle – example

- **EU Contribution**: €5,000,000
- **Duration**: 60 months
- **Pre-financing**: 55%
- **Pre-financing amount**: €2,750,000 (55% of maximum EU Contribution)
- **Of which**:
  - **Guarantee fund amount**: €250,000 (5% of maximum EU Contribution)
  - **Payment to beneficiary**: €2,500,000
2. Interim Payment (1)

- **Article 21.3 of the Grant Agreement**
- Reimbursement of the eligible costs incurred for the implementation of the action during the period.
- Number of reporting periods: 2
- RP1: from month 1 to X
- RP2: from month X+1 to end of the project
Interim Payment (2)

• Payment amount: up to the *accepted* amount of cost claim
• Limit to 90% of the maximum grant amount
• i.e. 10% of the maximum grant amount must be retained until end of grant
• Payment deadline: 90 days after receipt of full report.
• 'stop-the-clock' for any missing/unclear information and any missing deliverables (e.g. Researcher Declarations)
Interim payment – example

- **EU Contribution:** €5,000,000
- **Pre-financing:** €2,750,000
- **60 months:** 2 Reporting Periods
  - 1st Reporting Period: months 1 - 24
  - 2nd Reporting Period: months 25 - 60 (end of the project)
- **90% of EU contribution:** €4,500,000
- **Max payable =** €4,500,000 – pre-financing amount = €1,750,000
- **1st Reporting Period:** cost claim submitted for €3,500,000. All costs accepted.
- **Payment amount =** €1,750,000
3. Payment of balance

- Article 21.4 of the Grant Agreement: the payment of the balance reimburses the remaining part of the eligible costs incurred by the beneficiary for the implementation of the action.
  - Payment is subject to the approval of the final report.
  - Reports required 60 days after the end of the grant.
  - Payment amount: calculated by the Agency by deducting the total amount of pre-financing and interim payments (if any) already made, from the final grant amount=accepted cost.
  - Includes return of the Guarantee Fund amount.
  - Payment deadline: 90 days after receipt of full report.
  - 'stop-the-clock' for any missing/unclear information and any missing deliverables.
Financial reporting

• Electronic only

• Individual Financial Statement (Annex 4 to the GA) for the beneficiary of the GA.

• No paper copies required by REA.

• Declaration of cost: beneficiary indicates the number of implemented person months (for researchers recruited under the action) and the costs are automatically calculated by the IT-system.
Financial payment example
• Guidance by business process – reporting, amendments etc.
• Links to the relevant articles of the Annotated Grant Agreement.
• The H2020 Online Manual updated regularly.
Online manual

Source: European Commission
Online manual continued…
Continuous Reporting
Deliverables

- Deliverables are uploaded in the IT-tool through the continuous reporting module
  - Researcher Declaration within 20 days of the start of the research training activities, one for each researcher;
  - Other Deliverables identified in Annex 1, in accordance with the timing and conditions set out in it.

- In H2020 the deliverables are submitted via the Participant Portal
Periodic Reporting
Project Periodic Reports

- *Periodic Report (within 60 days following the end of each reporting period)*
- Periodic technical report
- Periodic financial report
- *Final Report (in addition to the periodic report for the last reporting period)*
- Final technical report
- Final financial report
- In H2020 the periodic and final reports are submitted via the Participant Portal
Researcher Declaration

- Within 20 days of the start of the research training activities, one for each researcher:
  - Start date – end date of the fellowship
  - Name and Surname
  - Gender
  - Birth date
  - Nationality
  - E-mail...
Deliverables

• 1.- Report on evaluation and selection
• Deviations from the Evaluation Procedure described in Annex I?
• Number of applications/How many eligible/ineligible?
• Dates when the evaluation and selection took place
• Call opening – Call closing
• Names and Affiliations of experts involved (From which countries? Gender? Sectors?)
• Was the evaluation done remotely or onsite?
• Was there a briefing of the experts?
• Number of experts evaluating each proposal?
• Number of proposals passing/failing evaluation
• Number of fellows finally selected under the specific Call (and in the reserve list, if relevant).
Deliverables

- 2. - Report on dissemination activities
- Dates of Call Publication and places where it was published (Supporting documents required)
- Flyers, brochures, or other information produced
- Presentations conferences and meetings or other events
- Published articles in the press
- Any other means of advertising the programme
- Quantitative information, for instance.
- Number of Conferences
- Number of press releases
- Number of Flyers
Deliverables

• **3.- Call Publication**
  - Inform the Project Officer by sending the link to the Euraxess website where the Call has been published

• **4.-Report on ethical issues**
  - Separate presentation on ethics
Periodic Reporting
Periodic report

• **Part A**
  
  Information imported from the continuous reporting module.

• **Part B – narrative part**
  
  Explanation of the work carried out and overview of progress
  
  – Objectives
  
  – Explanation of the work carried per Work Package
  
  – Impact
  
  – Explanations on deviations from DoA

• Information entered in the IT tool

• PDF document
Periodic financial report

- Financial statement (Annex 4 to the GA)
- A periodic summary financial statement including the request for payment
Participant Portal
IT tools

- Continuous reporting module
- Periodic reporting module

Source: European Commission
My projects

This page enables you to access all your EU projects managed via the Participant Portal that have been selected and approved for funding.

Depending on your roles, you can view or manage the following project-related tasks:

- Prepare and sign your grant agreement
- Submit amendments to your grant agreement
- Manage your scientific and financial reports
- View or manage roles and access rights in your projects consortia

If you are LEAR and want to see the full list of your organisation projects, please go to My Organisations and click on the action button VP. LEAR can only view the list of projects in which their organisation is involved.

For more details see the H2020 online manual.
Continuous reporting

Source: European Commission
Periodic reporting

Source: European Commission
Submit deliverables when they are due

- Publications
- Dissemination
- Patents
- Gender
- Researchers (researcher declarations)
- Information to be entered in the IT tool at any time during the life of the project.
Periodic reporting module

- Beneficiaries complete on-line the financial statements
- The coordinator will be able to upload the Part B of the periodic technical report (narrative part)
- At the time the coordinator submits the periodic report, the IT tool will capture the information from the continuous reporting module in order to generate automatically the Periodic report.
- The periodic technical report will be 'locked for review' by the coordinator before its submission. Make sure the information in the continuous reporting module is up-to-date before the periodic report is 'locked for review'. Updates entered after this step will be included in the periodic report of the following period.
The beneficiary receives a notification and logs on to the Participant Portal.

The beneficiary completes the Financial Statement and the Technical Part of the Periodic Report. Then e-signs and submits the Financial Statements to the Coordinator.

The Coordinator approves the elements of the Periodic Report & submits to the EU Services.

The EU Services review the submitted Periodic Report and accept or reject it.

Interim Payment
Summary of submission of periodic reports

Source: European Commission

**Beneficiaries (including the coordinator)**
- **Financial statement:** Type → Lock for review → Sign & Submit
- **Technical Report:** Type → Lock for review

**Coordinator**
- **Financial statements:** Check → Redo Include → Submit to EU
- **Technical Report:** Check → Accept & Include
Requests for changes

- 1.- Information Procedure
- 2.- Amendments
1.- Information Procedure

• Applicable for changes that have to be reflected in the contract, but which does not depend on the agreement of the parties.

• The LEAR will act directly via PP (you will be requested to provide supporting documents if needed)

• (PP- My Area- My Organization)

• For the following:
  – To notify about changes in the beneficiary details (legal name, legal address, VAT, ...)
  – Change of legal status
  – Universal transfer of rights and obligations
2.- Amendments

• Changes in the Grant agreement, for instance:
  – Change of bank account for payments
  – Change of the action's starting date
  – Changes of Annex 1 (description of the action)
  – Change of reporting periods
  – Change of the action's duration

• It is recommended to request prior verification from the project officer

• (Via PP- MP)
Amendments - Main steps

- Launch the amendment preparation in the Participants Portal
- Compose the amendment
- Request from the PO an "unofficial" review (not compulsory)
- Sign & Submit the amendment
- EU services accept or reject the amendment
The Coordinator (or the EC) launches the amendment request and prepares all data
Launch new interaction with the Service

Choose one of the options below

Launch new amendment - Beta version (limited number of amendment clauses supported)

Several draft amendment requests can be launched in parallel (although it is strongly recommended to limit the number). Once an amendment is signed, these draft amendments will be updated or invalidated by the system in order to reflect the latest signed amendment. The new amendment will be based on the latest legal data.

Launch

This will create the request for amendment. Please wait for the reference number to appear.

A request for amendment is being created ...

An amendment request reference number, containing the project number, is being created. This number is important, because it will be used to trace the amendment.

Amendment created with reference: AMD-890732-1. The task will appear as soon as the system completes the launching process.
Option: Involving the Project Officer for a difficult amendment request

During the preparation of a difficult amendment request, it is recommended to involve the Project Officer. Validation rules are very flexible so the Project Officer can easily be involved. Clicking the Involve PO button, notifies the PO and hands the session over to the her/him to either make an unofficial review of the amendment and/or to apply some modifications on the amendment data.

Only the Coordinator Contact Person can perform this action.
a. Lock the amendment request for review.

The amendment request can be locked for review (the data are locked, a pdf is generated ready for electronic signature), in order to assess the request. This means that nobody can edit any data any more at this point.

Only the Coordinator Contact Person can perform this action.
b. Sign and submit the amendment

After reviewing the request, the Project Legal Signatory (PLSIGN) logs in to the Participant Portal. He then signs and submits the amendment request to the EU. In case he would like to make some changes to the request he can click the Unlock to draft button and send it back to the people who prepare the amendment request (Coordinator Contact Person).

Only the Project Legal Signatory can sign and submit the amendment request.

Please be aware that in case new beneficiaries have been added, they will have to sign their declaration and accession forms electronically, before you can sign and submit.
Step 5: The EU Services accept (and countersign the amendment) or reject (and makes available a rejection letter).

On completion of the assessment, the amendment is accepted or rejected and countersigned by the EU. The metro line moves to the status decision in both cases and the process is closed and the process box will turn black.

In case the amendment request is rejected, a letter motivating the rejection will be available.
Communication
Art. 20.3 Periodic reports — Requests for interim payments

• […] The report must also detail the exploitation and dissemination of the results and – if required in Annex I – an updated "plan for the exploitation and dissemination of the results"
• A summary for publication by the Agency
Art. 20.4 Final report — Request for payment of the balance

• [...] a ‘final technical report’ with a summary for publication containing:
  • (i) an overview of the results and their exploitation and dissemination;
  • (ii) the conclusions on the action, and
  • (iii) the socio-economic impact of the action.
Art. 38.1.1 Obligation to promote the action and its results

- providing targeted information to **multiple audiences** (including the media and the public), in a strategic and effective manner and possibly engaging in a two-way exchange.
• Any communication activity that is expected to have a "major media impact" (i.e. online and printed press, broadcast media, social media, etc.) with a potential for national and international outreach must be first notified to the Agency.

• The beneficiary is free to choose the type of communication, for instance:
  – a press release for the general public;
  – an interview in a local radio station;
  – a brochure to explain the action to school or university students (...)

• Articles 29.4 & 38.1.2 Information on EU funding
• Any dissemination of results, communication activity related to the project (1) and any infrastructure, equipment and major results (2) must:
  – display the EU emblem
  – include the following statement/s:
Statements

• (1)“This project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No [number]”.

• (2)“This [infrastructure][equipment][insert type of result] is part of a project that has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. [number]”. 
Selecting researchers
Art.15.1.1 Procedure and criteria for selecting researchers in programmes:

- Doctoral Programmes
- Fellowship Programmes
- H2020 COFUND Grant Agreement Art. 15.1.1
- H2020 Annotated Grant Agreement page 474-478
Researchers must be selected following an open, transparent, merit-based, impartial and equitable selection procedure, as described in Annex 1.

Vacancies must be internationally advertised and published (including on the web-sites requested by the Agency).

The beneficiary/partner organisation must publish vacancies as widely as possible
- at international level and
- on web-sites requested by the Agency (e.g. on EURAXESS Jobs).
Fellowship Programmes:

- Researchers must be selected following an open, transparent, merit-based, impartial and equitable selection procedure, based on international peer review, as described in Annex 1.
- Selection committees must bring together diverse expertise, have an adequate gender balance and include members from other countries and with relevant experience to assess the candidates.
- The beneficiary/partner organisation must publish calls for proposals as widely as possible:
  - at international level and
  - on web-sites requested by the Agency (e.g. on EURAXESs Jobs).
- H2020 COFUND Grant Agreement Art. 15.1.1
- H2020 Annotated Grant Agreement page 474-478
Webpage

• Location of the webpage - don't hide it!
• Content of the webpage (no language barrier):
  • General and specific information about the project
  • Guide for Applicants; remuneration rates; FAQs
  • Application, evaluation process and call dates *(see next slide)*
The webpage continued

- Application, evaluation process and call dates:
  - Eligibility criteria
  - If/how career breaks are taken into account
  - Evaluation criteria
  - Ethics
  - Time schedule
  - Selection /number of fellowships
  - Redress procedure
  - Feedback for applicants (nr. of eligible, evaluated, selected fellows)

- Contact
Communicating EU Research & Innovation

- Guidance for project participants
Any questions?