



Information note for Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellows in Innovative Training Networks (ITN)

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Curie Fellows in
Innovative Training Networks (ITN)**

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Information note for Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellows in Innovative Training Networks (ITN)¹

This document complements the general *Information package for Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellows*² with information on the conditions of appointment and remuneration specifically for those holding an MSCA fellowship as part of an Innovative Training Network (ITN). Quotations in italics are from the model grant agreement for ITN³.

What are Innovative Training Networks (ITN)?

ITNs are competitively awarded, multi-beneficiary, international research and training networks providing post-graduate training in specific and inter-disciplinary scientific fields. They bring together networks of research-performing institutions – from both the academic and non-academic sectors – around a common research and training programme to strengthen the career perspectives of early-stage researchers and to support entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation across Europe. About 110-130 separate new projects are financed every year.

ITNs can come in three different forms:

- **European Training Networks (ETN)**: most ITN projects are implemented as ETNs, composed of at least three organisations established in at least three different EU Member States (MS) or Horizon 2020 Associated Countries (AC)⁴.
- **European Industrial Doctorates (EID)**: these are designed to closely involve the non-academic sector in doctoral training. They must be composed of at least two independent beneficiaries established in two different MS or AC, with at least one from the non-academic sector. Researchers recruited in an EID project must spend at least 50% of their recruitment period at institutions in the non-academic sector. They must also be enrolled in a PhD programme, jointly supervised by an academic and a non-academic organisation.
- **European Joint Doctorates (EJD)**: these have the objective of promoting international, inter-sectoral and multi/inter-disciplinary collaboration in doctoral-level training in Europe through the creation and delivery of joint doctoral programmes. EJD fellows must receive joint supervision and be enrolled in such a programme leading to joint, double or multiple doctoral degrees.

¹ This document is provided for information purposes only and is not intended to replace consultation of any applicable legal sources. Neither the European Commission nor the Research Executive Agency (or any person acting on their behalf) can be held responsible for the use made of this information note.

² http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/msca/documents/documentation/publications/msca-fellows-information-package_en.pdf

³ http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/mga/msca/h2020-mga-msca-itn-multi_en.pdf

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/3cpart/h2020-hi-list-ac_en.pdf

ITN researchers

Eligibility

ITN offers funding for early-stage researchers only. To be eligible for recruitment within an ITN project, you therefore must – at the date of recruitment – be within the first four years (full-time equivalent research experience) of your research career and not have a doctoral degree. Full-time equivalent research experience is measured from the date when you obtained the degree entitling you to embark on a doctorate (either in the country in which the degree was obtained, or in the country in which you are recruited), even if a doctorate was never started or envisaged. You may therefore be required to provide documentation proving your eligibility for recruitment.

Mobility Rule

The MSCA are a researcher mobility programme. You are therefore required to undertake transnational mobility in order to be eligible for recruitment in an ITN project. As such, you must not have resided or carried out your main activity (e.g. work, studies) in the country where you have been recruited "*for more than 12 months in the 3 years immediately before the recruitment date*"⁵. Holidays are not counted. Your employer is required to verify this fact, therefore you may be required to provide supporting documentation proving your place(s) of residence or work during the previous 3 years. Note that the mobility rule applies only to your first recruitment within the project, and not to other organisations to which you might be sent on secondment or at which you may subsequently also be recruited. Finally, the mobility rule is related to your residence or main activity and not to your nationality.

What are my rights as an ITN research fellow?

The MSCA grant agreement requires that you have access to the infrastructure and supervision that you need to adequately conduct your research and implement your project. Should this not be the case, please refer the matter to your project coordinator.

Recruitment

Vacancies in ITN projects must be advertised and published internationally, including on the Euraxess website. The recruitment procedure must be open, transparent, impartial and equitable. Therefore, the final decision is taken on the basis of the candidates' scientific skills, the relevance of their research experience, the impact of the proposed training on their career, and ensuring a fair gender representation⁶.

Employment

In principle, you should be recruited with an employment contract which includes social security coverage (unless this is not possible under national law⁷). The employment contract should specify your salary; it can state the total/annual salary, as long as it is

⁵ Article 6.2.A(b)(v) of the model grant agreement for ITN

⁶ Article 32.1(c) of the model grant agreement for ITN

⁷ See Article 6.2.A(b)(i) of the model grant agreement for ITN

possible to determine the monthly salary (e.g. by dividing the annual salary by 12). A clear explanation of how your net salary is calculated should also be provided by your employer. Note that recruitments supported by an ITN must be for a minimum duration of 3 months, and a maximum of 36 months. However, the specific length of your recruitment must be specified in your employment contract. You should be fully aware of and understand all the provisions of your contract *before* signing it. This may require a translation of the contract into English or your mother tongue.

The project consortium is required to submit electronically a Researcher Declaration within 20 days of your recruitment⁸. This contains data about you and the provisions of your employment contract, including duration, contract type, etc., that the European Commission requires.

Assistance

Your employer is required to assist you in all administrative procedures related to your recruitment within the project⁹, for example in obtaining a visa, preparing your Career Development Plan, etc. They are also required to inform you about your rights and obligations under the grant agreement, including who will be your supervisor, when and for how long your appointment shall last, your salary and conditions, the allowances you are entitled to receive, etc.

Hosting

Each employer has the obligation to host recruited researchers and provide training as well as the necessary means for implementing the action¹⁰. Your usual place of employment and where you turn up for work each day should normally be at the premises of the institution that has recruited you and which is paying your living and mobility allowances (see below). Note that your host institution may be required to demonstrate a proof of your *physical presence* at its premises during the period of your recruitment¹¹. Your host institution should provide you with the resources and equipment required to conduct your work. Should it be necessary for you to use the infrastructure or premises of other organisations in order to conduct your research, this should be outlined in the grant agreement.

Supervision

Your host institution should also be able to ensure adequate supervision of your research¹². How "adequate supervision" is understood, however, will depend on your employer, on yourself, and on the particular field of research. It should, however, be adequate for you to satisfactorily complete your research project. Where supervision is

⁸ Article 19.1 of the model grant agreement for ITN

⁹ Article 32.1(g) of the model grant agreement for ITN

¹⁰ Article 32.1(k) and Article 32.1(l) of the model grant agreement for ITN

¹¹ Article 18.1.2 of the model grant agreement for ITN

¹² Article 32.1(m) of the model grant agreement for ITN

provided by someone based at another organisation, this should be clearly specified in the grant agreement.

Allowances

The funds provided to your employer for the purposes of implementing the project are divided into two categories: those for the benefit of the researcher ("researcher unit costs"), and those for the host organisation ("institutional unit costs"):

i) Researcher unit costs

These allowances are paid to you as the recruited researcher. Note that the total amount received may vary from employer to employer, even within the same country. This is because employer as well as employee payroll taxes and social security costs can be deducted from the gross salary.

- ✓ **Living Allowance:** this is the basic, gross amount that you should receive in monthly instalments *before* taxation and compulsory deductions. For projects funded under the ITN Calls 2014-2017, this amount is EUR 3 110 per month. For projects under the ITN Calls 2018-2020, it is EUR 3 270 per month. To ensure equal treatment and purchasing power parity, this amount is then adjusted through the application of a correction coefficient based on the country in which you have been recruited. Fellows recruited in higher cost countries therefore receive a higher gross living allowance than those recruited in lower cost countries. The coefficients applied are indicated in the corresponding MSCA Work Programme and in the grant agreement. Note that each coefficient applies to the whole country in question, even if the cost of living may differ between cities or regions within that country.
- ✓ **Mobility Allowance:** This is a monthly amount of EUR 600 in addition to the living allowance and should normally be paid at the same time¹³. It is intended to cover the costs associated with the fact that you have moved to a different country in order to take up your position. However, this amount is not related to whether you are travelling to/from your home country or not. Furthermore, it is for your private use, therefore it is not meant to cover any expenses related to the project (such as travel costs for a conference).
- ✓ **Family Allowance:** Should you have a family at the time of your recruitment, you are entitled to an additional "family allowance" of EUR 500 per month. For the purposes of the MSCA, family is defined as "*persons linked to the researcher by marriage (or a relationship with equivalent status to a marriage recognised by the legislation of the country where this relationship was formalised) or dependent children who are actually being maintained by the researcher*"¹⁴. Note that your family status is determined at the time of your recruitment and remains fixed during the lifetime of the project.
- ✓ **Non-Eurozone Members:** The project budget is calculated and paid in euro; employers must also report their costs in euro. Where your allowances are *not*

¹³ Other arrangements are also possible, provided that they are mutually agreed upon, allowed under national law and do not lead to underpayment.

¹⁴ Article 6.2.A(c) of the model grant agreement for ITN

paid in euro, i.e. because your employer is not located within the eurozone, the allowances you receive may consequently fluctuate due to exchange rate changes. Your host is required to report the costs on the basis of an average of the daily exchange rates over the reporting period. It is permissible for an employer to slightly underpay a fellow on a monthly basis, as long as the fellow receives the correct amount by – at the latest – the end of their fellowship.

1.

ii) Institutional unit costs

These allowances are directly managed by the employer and are divided into two categories: *Research, Training and Networking Costs*, and *Management and Indirect Costs*.

- ✓ ***Research, Training and Networking Costs:*** This is a fixed amount of EUR 1 800 per month for each month a researcher is recruited in the project. Although administered by your employer, this amount is intended to cover the costs associated with your participation in the project, for example attending training courses, conferences, or when travelling for a secondment. This amount should also help cover the cost of your research (e.g. consumables), as appropriate, and can also be used to cover other related costs, such as visas. Note, however, that this amount is administered by the host organisation, not by the fellows themselves. Therefore please discuss with your supervisor your needs, such as to attend conferences.
- ✓ ***Management and Indirect Costs:*** This is a fixed monthly amount of EUR 1 200 per researcher per month in order to cover the host institution's costs of involvement in the project.

Secondments

Secondments are a period of time spent at another organisation within the consortium with the aim of implementing your individual research project. Spending periods of secondment at other institutions within the project is actively encouraged insofar as this is useful for your research or training. Inter-sectoral secondments (i.e. between the academic and non-academic sectors) are particularly encouraged. Note, however, that secondments must be limited to a maximum of 30% of your total recruitment period within the project (except for EID and EJD where different rules apply). Therefore, e.g. in case of recruitment for 36 months, no more than 10.8 months should be spent outside the organisation that is employing you.

Additional costs related to secondments of 6 months or less (e.g. housing, travel expenses) should be covered by the "Research, Training and Networking" costs, not by your living or mobility allowance.

Specific Issues

Ethics and Research Integrity

The project must comply with ethical principles, including the highest standards of research integrity¹⁵, and all applicable international, EU and national law. Any specific ethics requirements will be outlined in the Description of the action (Annex 1 to the grant agreement), including any documentation or certificates to be provided to the REA before the research work in question begins. Should any ethics concerns arise during project implementation that you are not able to satisfactorily address with your supervisor and/or project coordinator, please refer to the complaints procedure below.

PhD Enrolment

In the context of EID and EJD projects, all fellows must be enrolled as PhD candidates. In ETN projects it is not mandatory, but is strongly recommended and the situation must in any case correspond to what is stated in the proposal. Note that any enrolment costs or tuition fees are eligible costs and should be charged to the employer (under "Research, Training and Networking" costs). Under no circumstances should these costs be charged to you¹⁶.

Teaching

Teaching during your recruitment period could be required as a condition of your PhD enrolment, but in such cases this should be outlined in the Description of the action. Teaching is welcomed, insofar as it does not jeopardise the fulfilment of your research activities within the project.

Complaints

Your project should have a complaints procedure in place and it should be clear to whom you should refer to in case of complaints. Please also see the guidance on complaints in the 'career guidance and supervision' section of the general *Information package for Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellows*¹⁷. The REA Project Officer responsible for your project will normally attend the mid-term review meeting and will offer the recruited fellows the opportunity to discuss any concerns that may arise.

¹⁵ Further described under Article 34 of the annotated grant agreement for Horizon 2020 at http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/amga/h2020-amga_en.pdf, including reference to the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity

¹⁶ Article 32.1(j) of the model grant agreement for ITN

¹⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/msca/documents/documentation/publications/msca-fellows-information-package_en.pdf

Contract Suspensions

In certain, limited cases (e.g. absence for more than 30 consecutive calendar days (other than normal annual leave), maternity/paternity leave) – and only with the prior agreement of the REA – it is possible for fellows to suspend the implementation of their respective fellowship. For exceptional personal or family reasons, it might also be possible to work part-time on your research project. In each case, this matter should be discussed beforehand with your supervisor.

Intellectual Property Rights

The participating organisations must give you – and where appropriate their partners in the project – royalty-free access to the background and results necessary for your research work. "Background" means any data, know-how or information that is held by an organisation *before* it signs the grant agreement and which is needed to implement the project or exploit its results. "Results" means any (tangible or intangible) output generated by the project, such as data, knowledge or information.

Confidentiality

You must maintain all necessary confidentiality relating to your research work¹⁸.

After your fellowship

In any ITN project, MSCA funding can support the researcher for a maximum period of 36 months. There is no exception to this rule, meaning that in those cases where the completion and submission of your doctoral thesis takes more than 36 months, you may need to look for additional financial support. You may therefore wish to discuss this matter with your supervisor well before the completion of your participation in the ITN project.

There are, however, other EU funded opportunities that may be of interest to you once you have completed your project:

MSCA Individual Fellowships (IF)

These are individual research fellowships awarded to the best or most promising researchers of any nationality looking to enhance their career development and prospects by working abroad. Two types of fellowship are funded: European Fellowships, whereby researchers must either move to or within Europe (MS or AC), and Global Fellowships in which the fellow is seconded to a third country for a maximum of two years and then must return to a European host institution for a mandatory 12-month period. To be eligible, fellows must be Experienced Researchers with either a doctoral degree or at least four years full-time research experience. Funding is available for a period of

¹⁸ Article 32.1(f)(vii) of the model grant agreement for ITN

between 12-24 months for European Fellowships (12-36 months for Career Restart Panel) and 24-36 months for Global Fellowships. More information is available in the MSCA Work Programme and the respective IF Guides for Applicants.

European Voluntary Service (EVS)

Funded under the Erasmus+ Programme, the EVS helps young people aged 17-30 travel abroad to participate in volunteering projects for a period of between two weeks and 12 months. Projects can involve many different kinds of activities in areas such as youth work, cultural activities, social care or environmental protection and take place both within and outside of Europe. Although the voluntary work is unpaid, essential costs such as accommodation, board and local transport are covered.

