

MSCA Frequently Asked Questions

MSCA Calls 2021

Under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowships (MSCA-PF), may a proposal that was rejected under a previous MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowship call be re-submitted?

- ✓ Applicants will be allowed to re-submit a proposal that was rejected under the previous Horizon Europe MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowship call, unless the proposal scored below 70%.

A researcher wants to apply to a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowship (MSCA-PF) together with an institution based in a country that is not associated to Horizon Europe. Is this possible?

- ✓ Only legal entities established in an EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country are eligible for funding under MSCA-PF. Association to Horizon Europe takes place through the conclusion of an international agreement between the EU and the non-EU country. Association agreements with 18 countries are currently under negotiation and transitional arrangements apply. Switzerland has no association agreement yet.

Under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowships (MSCA-PF), which scientific panel should the researcher choose for his proposal? Must it be in the field of their highest degree diploma?

- ✓ Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions have a bottom-up approach, meaning that proposals from all scientific areas (including those covered by EURATOM) are eligible for funding. The proposal should be submitted to one of the 8 main scientific areas, defined in the MSCA Work Programme, in which the proposal best fits. It is not compulsory to choose the same field as the applicant's PhD.

Under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral European Fellowships (MSCA-EF), how will the mobility rule be applied to periods of remote working/teleworking, when assessing eligibility?

- ✓ In order to be eligible, the researcher cannot be in either of the two following situations:
- have resided in the country of the beneficiary for more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately prior to the call deadline,
 - have 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.
- Please take note that in case of remote work performed from country A for an employer located in country B, the place of main activity is considered as country B.

Under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Global Fellowships (MSCA-GF), how will the mobility rule for the outgoing phase be applied to periods of remote working/teleworking, when assessing eligibility?

- ✓ In order to be eligible for a MSCA-GF, the researcher cannot be in either of the two following situations:
- have resided in the country of associated partner hosting the outgoing phase for more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately prior to the call deadline,
 - have carried out his/her main activity (work, studies, etc.) in the country of associated partner hosting the outgoing phase for more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately prior to the call deadline. Please take note that in case of remote work performed from country A for an employer located in country B, the place of main activity is considered as country B.

Under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowships (MSCA-PF), how will the non-academic sector placement be evaluated?

- ✓ The additional non-academic sector placement is optional and no penalisation will be applied to applicants that do not propose one. The request for such a placement must be an integral part of the proposal, explaining the added-value for the project and for the career development of the researcher, and will be subject to evaluation. It must be substantiated by a letter of commitment from the European non-academic organisation where the placement takes place. This will be scored under the Excellence criterion.

Source | <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/support/faq>

MSCA Frequently Asked Questions

MSCA Calls 2021 (contd. 2/6)

Under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowships (MSCA-PF), are there any flexibility measures for eligibility due to the postponement of the MSCA-PF-2021-01 call?

- ✓ The eligibility of a researcher will still be determined based on the official call deadline

Under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowships (MSCA-PF), how is the 8-year limit for research experience determined?

- ✓ The limit of 8-years full-time research experience is determined based on the date of award of the (first) PhD. In specific cases, researchers exceeding this limit can declare deductions, for example for maternity leave, paternity leave, career breaks, research experience in third countries (full list in the Work Programme and Guide for Applicants). Such deductions should be declared in Part A of the submission forms. No supporting documents should be added in the proposal application, but they should be readily available in case of audit.

What is a non-academic placement in Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowships (MSCA-PF)?

- ✓ Under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowships, the non-academic placement is an additional period of up to six months to support researchers seeking a placement at the end of the project to work on R&D projects in an organisation from the non-academic sector established in an EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country. The placement needs to be in line with the project objectives and add significant value and/or impact to the fellowship. The request for a non-academic sector placement must be included in the proposal. However, proposals will not be penalised for not including a non-academic placement. Note that the non-academic placement is not a secondment.

Under Horizon Europe MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships, can periods spent outside research be deducted from the calculation of research experience if my PhD was awarded more than 8 years prior to the call deadline?

- ✓ The limit of 8-years full-time research experience at the call deadline is determined based on the date of award of the first PhD. To be considered valid, extensions (for instance maternity leave, paternity leave, career breaks, research experience in non-associated third countries) MUST:
- fall between the date of the first PhD award and the call deadline (i.e. they don't have to be in the 8 years immediately prior to the call deadline)
- AND
- fulfill the conditions indicated in the Work Programme and the Guide for Applicants.
- Any valid extension can be encoded for as a deduction at the proposal submission stage, in Part A of the forms. Supporting documents are not required in the proposal application but should be kept readily available in case of an audit.

Under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowships (MSCA-PF), will stays for medical reasons be taken into account for the mobility rule?

- ✓ This depends on the duration of the stay for medical reasons. Short stays for medical reasons will not be taken into account for the assessment of the mobility rule. However, if the researcher had to relocate to a different country in order to obtain medical care during a significant period of time, this long stay will be taken into account.

Under MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships (MSCA-PF), how should the research experience be taken into consideration when calculating the 8-year full-time equivalent research experience if the work experience after the PhD degree is not 100% focused on research?

- ✓ The maximum of 8 years after PhD can be extended for the time spent outside research, including teaching. The time not spent on research and related activities can be deducted from the 8-year calculation provided that it can be documented by e.g. work contract/job description and quantified based on documentation/proof which the host organisation (beneficiary) needs to keep for their records (not to be included in the proposal).

Source | <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/support/faq>

MSCA Frequently Asked Questions

MSCA Calls 2021 (contd. 3/6)

Under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowships (MSCA-PF), are there any flexibility measures for eligibility due to the postponement of the MSCA-PF-2021-01 call?

- ✓ The eligibility of a researcher will still be determined based on the official call deadline

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- ✓ The limit of 8-years full-time research experience is determined based on the date of award of the (first) PhD. In specific cases, researchers exceeding this limit can declare deductions, for example for maternity leave, paternity leave, career breaks, research experience in third countries (full list in the Work Programme and Guide for Applicants). Such deductions should be declared in Part A of the submission forms. No supporting documents should be added in the proposal application, but they should be readily available in case of audit.

What is a non-academic placement in Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowships (MSCA-PF)?

- ✓ Under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowships, the non-academic placement is an additional period of up to six months to support researchers seeking a placement at the end of the project to work on R&D projects in an organisation from the non-academic sector established in an EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country. The placement needs to be in line with the project objectives and add significant value and/or impact to the fellowship. The request for a non-academic sector placement must be included in the proposal. However, proposals will not be penalised for not including a non-academic placement. Note that the non-academic placement is not a secondment.

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- fall between the date of the first PhD award and the call deadline (i.e. they don't have to be in the 8 years immediately prior to the call deadline)
- AND
- fulfill the conditions indicated in the Work Programme and the Guide for Applicants.
- Any valid extension can be encoded for as a deduction at the proposal submission stage, in Part A of the forms. Supporting documents are not required in the proposal application but should be kept readily available in case of an audit.

Under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowships (MSCA-PF), will stays for medical reasons be taken into account for the mobility rule?

- ✓ This depends on the duration of the stay for medical reasons. Short stays for medical reasons will not be taken into account for the assessment of the mobility rule. However, if the researcher had to relocate to a different country in order to obtain medical care during a significant period of time, this long stay will be taken into account.

Under MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships (MSCA-PF), how should the research experience be taken into consideration when calculating the 8-year full-time equivalent research experience if the work experience after the PhD degree is not 100% focused on research?

- ✓ The maximum of 8 years after PhD can be extended for the time spent outside research, including teaching. The time not spent on research and related activities can be deducted from the 8-year calculation provided that it can be documented by e.g. work contract/job description and quantified based on documentation/proof which the host organisation (beneficiary) needs to keep for their records (not to be included in the proposal).

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MSCA Frequently Asked Questions

MSCA Calls 2021 (contd. 4/6)

Under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowships (MSCA-PF), will the 18-month period for each child born after the PhD award be acknowledged even though the female researcher was employed part-time?

- ✓ For maternity, for each child born within the 8-year eligibility period (i.e. after the PhD award date), a fixed amount of 18 months (548 days) can be deducted by the applicant from the experience in research, unless the applicant can document a longer parental leave prior to the call deadline. This applies also for those working part-time.

Under MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships (MSCA-PF), what kind of documents does the applicant have to submit in order to justify career breaks (e.g. due to maternity/parental leave) that would not count towards the maximum amount of research experience?

- ✓ No supporting documentation demonstrating the researcher's eligibility will have to be submitted to the Research Executive Agency (REA) at the point of proposal submission. However, if the proposal is successful, it is an obligation for the beneficiary (the entity signing the grant agreement) to ensure that all of the necessary supporting documentation relating to the researcher's eligibility (mobility, years of experience in research, etc.) are requested, verified and kept on file in case of audit. REA may request supporting documents to the beneficiary applicant to assess the eligibility after the call deadline.

Under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowships (MSCA-PF), how will the proposal be assessed if the applicant has not yet been awarded a PhD? In case of multiple degrees, which one counts to determine the eligibility?

- ✓ The PhD date is considered to be the date the doctoral degree was awarded. In those cases that the PhD was successfully defended - but not formally awarded - before the MSCA-PF call deadline, the applicant should indicate the date of their viva (PhD defence). In the case of multiple doctoral degrees, the date of the first PhD will be considered in determining eligibility. No supporting documents should be added in the proposal application but they should be readily available in case of audit.

Under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowships (MSCA-PF), should extensions to the 8-year limit for research experience be in the 8 years immediately prior to the call deadline?

- ✓ Any valid extensions (such as for maternity leave, paternity leave, career breaks, and other reasons specified in the Work Programme and Guide for Applicants) can be encoded as long as they fall between the date of (first) PhD award and the call deadline. They do not have to be in the 8 years immediately prior to the call deadline.

Under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowships (MSCA-PF), can a researcher submit the proposal on his/her own?

- ✓ Proposals can be created and submitted by the supervisor or the researcher. However, the submission of the proposal and other actions that follow this procedure (such as withdrawal or, if successful, grant agreement signature) ultimately fall under the responsibility of the host organisation as represented by the main supervisor. Therefore, it is not advisable for a researcher to submit a proposal on his/her own.

Under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowships (MSCA-PF), are there equivalence criteria for doctoral degrees in terms of eligibility (for example medical research)?

- ✓ Applicants who have successfully defended their doctoral thesis on or before the call deadline but who have not yet formally been awarded the doctoral degree will also be considered as postdoctoral researchers and will be 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.

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MSCA Frequently Asked Questions

MSCA Calls 2021 (contd. 5/6)

Under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowships (MSCA-PF), will all sections of the proposal Part B be evaluated, or only those sections to which the page limit is applied?

- ✓ All sections of the proposal will be included in the evaluation. The 10-page limit is applied only to part B1 - sections 1 to 3 (combined). The reason for this is not to cause disadvantage, for example, to researchers with more experience and hence a longer CV, who may otherwise have reduced space to write sections 1 to 3.

Under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowships (MSCA-PF), how should applicants address the questions of Part A (Role of Participating Organisations) and Part B (Capacity of the Participating Organisations)?

- ✓ In European Fellowships (MSCA-PF-EF), Part A (Role of participating organisation) is relevant only for the beneficiary. In Global Fellowships (MSCA-PF-GF), Part A (Role of participating organisation) is relevant for the beneficiary and Associated Partner hosting the outgoing phase. If there is a non-academic placement, this question also applies to the Associated Partner where the placement is taking place. Part B (Capacity of the Participating Organisations) is relevant to all Participating Organisations in the action. Applicants should ensure full coherence between Parts A and B.

Under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowships, can the time spent during a Master's degree be counted for as research experience?

- ✓ No. A period spent at university is counted as research experience only if you are employed (or if you are the holder of a scholarship agreement) as a researcher at the university. A mere enrolment in a Master degree is considered as a "mere association" to a university, and not as research experience.

Under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowships (MSCA-PF), how are researchers compared during the evaluation with regard to their different levels of experience?

- ✓ The assessment of the researcher is a key element of the 'Excellence award' criterion 1.4 "Quality" and appropriateness of the researcher's professional experience, competences and skills. The fellowships will be awarded to the most talented researchers as determined by the proposed research, the researcher's track record (Curriculum Vitae, part B-2), and in relation to their level of experience.

Under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowships (MSCA-PF), are years of experience in research in Switzerland considered as time spent in third countries?

- ✓ For nationals or long-term residents of EU Member States or Horizon Europe Associated Countries who wish to reintegrate from a third country to pursue their research career by applying for MSCA-PF, any working time in research spent in Switzerland will not count towards the 8 years eligibility rule. In relation to Switzerland, all exploratory talks regarding the association of Switzerland to the next generation of EU programmes are currently on hold. Therefore, Switzerland is not treated as an Associated Country and has the status of Third Country.

For Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowships (MSCA-PF), are years of experience in research in the UK considered as time spent in third countries?

- ✓ Under Horizon Europe, the UK is treated as an Associated Country, subject to the entry into force of the association agreement. Association to Horizon Europe takes place through the conclusion of an international agreement between the EU and the non-EU country.

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MSCA Frequently Asked Questions

MSCA Calls 2021 (contd. 6/6)

Under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowships (MSCA-PF), must a separate application be made for the ERA fellowships (only relevant for European Fellowships)?

- ✓ Although the ERA Fellowships are technically a different call with a different funding mechanism, it is not possible to apply directly to the ERA call. All applications should therefore be sent to MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships where the proposals will be evaluated and ranked. Any MSCA-PF-EF application from a host in a widening country can express their wish to also be considered for funding under the ERA fellowships call. This option is not available for applicants to Postdoctoral Global Fellowships.

Under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowships (MSCA-PF), can a researcher apply with a host institution established in the United Kingdom?

- ✓ Only legal entities established in an EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country are eligible for funding under the MSCA-PF action. Under Horizon Europe, the UK is treated as an Associated Country subject to the entry into force of the association agreement. Institutions in the United Kingdom shall be treated in the evaluations as if they were based in an Associated Country from the launch date of the programme (subject to the entry into force of the association agreement with the United Kingdom by the time of signature of the grant agreement).

Under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowships (MSCA-PF), how is the non-academic placement encoded in the application form?

- ✓ The non-academic sector placement must be encoded in Part A of the proposal and described in Part B. In Part A of the submission wizard, the name of the associated partner where the non-academic placement will take place must be encoded as a participating organisation ("associated partner") in the tab "Participants". The Associated Partner needs to have a PIC number. In Part B1, the relevance and added-value of the non-academic placement period will be assessed by the evaluators and may therefore impact the final score awarded to the proposal. In Part B2, 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.

