

MSCA WORK PROGRAMME 2026-2027: KEY UPDATES

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MSCA WORK PROGRAMME 2026-2027: KEY UPDATES

CONTEXT

The MSCA Work Programme 2026–2027, adopted on 11 December 2025, sets the framework for the next phase of Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions under Horizon Europe. It confirms that the programme will continue to support doctoral and postdoctoral training, collaborative research and innovation, and public engagement with science, while also giving stronger visibility to the policy objective of reinforcing research careers in Europe.

In 2026, the MSCA will provide more than €1.25 billion for these activities, and this new programming period also coincides with the **30th anniversary** of the MSCA¹.

The main novelties in the MSCA Work Programme 2026–2027 are not a complete redesign of the programme, but a clear shift in emphasis:

- stronger attention to research careers
- a new flagship instrument around longer-term employment perspectives
- targeted simplification in Staff Exchanges and
- more explicit references to research security, inclusiveness, and responsible research careers policies.

The core MSCA architecture remains in place, with Doctoral Networks, Postdoctoral Fellowships, Staff Exchanges, COFUND, Choose Europe for Science, and MSCA and Citizens all present in the adopted Work Programme. The MSCA Work Programme for 2026–2027 contains a number of new elements compared to the previous work programme, described below.

¹ Horizon Europe Work Programme 2026-2027 - Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (European Commission Decision C(2025) 8493 of 11 December 2025) https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2026-2027/wp-2-marie-sklodowska-curie-actions_horizon-2026-2027_en.pdf

STRONGER POLICY FOCUS ON RESEARCH CAREERS

The 2026–2027 Work Programme frames MSCA more explicitly as a tool to attract, retain, and reintegrate talent in Europe. In the introduction, the Commission links MSCA to the Union of Skills strategic framework and states that Europe must encourage more people to choose research careers, attract top talent from around the world, retain its own researchers, and reintegrate those working elsewhere. This is more than general background language: throughout the document, the expected impacts of the actions repeatedly stress better working and employment conditions, stronger career guidance, transferable skills, and enhanced career perspectives in both the academic and non-academic sectors¹.

The Work Programme also makes a more explicit connection between MSCA and broader European reforms on research careers. It reinforces the role of the **European Charter for Researchers**², refers to the **MSCA Supervision Guidelines**³, and explicitly mentions the **Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment**⁴.

This matters because it signals that MSCA is not only funding mobility and training, but also acting as a vehicle for spreading European standards on recruitment, supervision, career progression, and working conditions.

MULTI-YEAR CALL CALENDAR

An important development is the clearer and already published multi-year call calendar. The MSCA DN and MSCA PF calls remain scheduled for the same period of the year. By contrast, the MSCA COFUND and MSCA Staff Exchanges calls will open in December and close in April, for both 2026 and 2027⁵.

² European Charter for Researchers <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/hrexcellenceaward/european-charter-researchers>

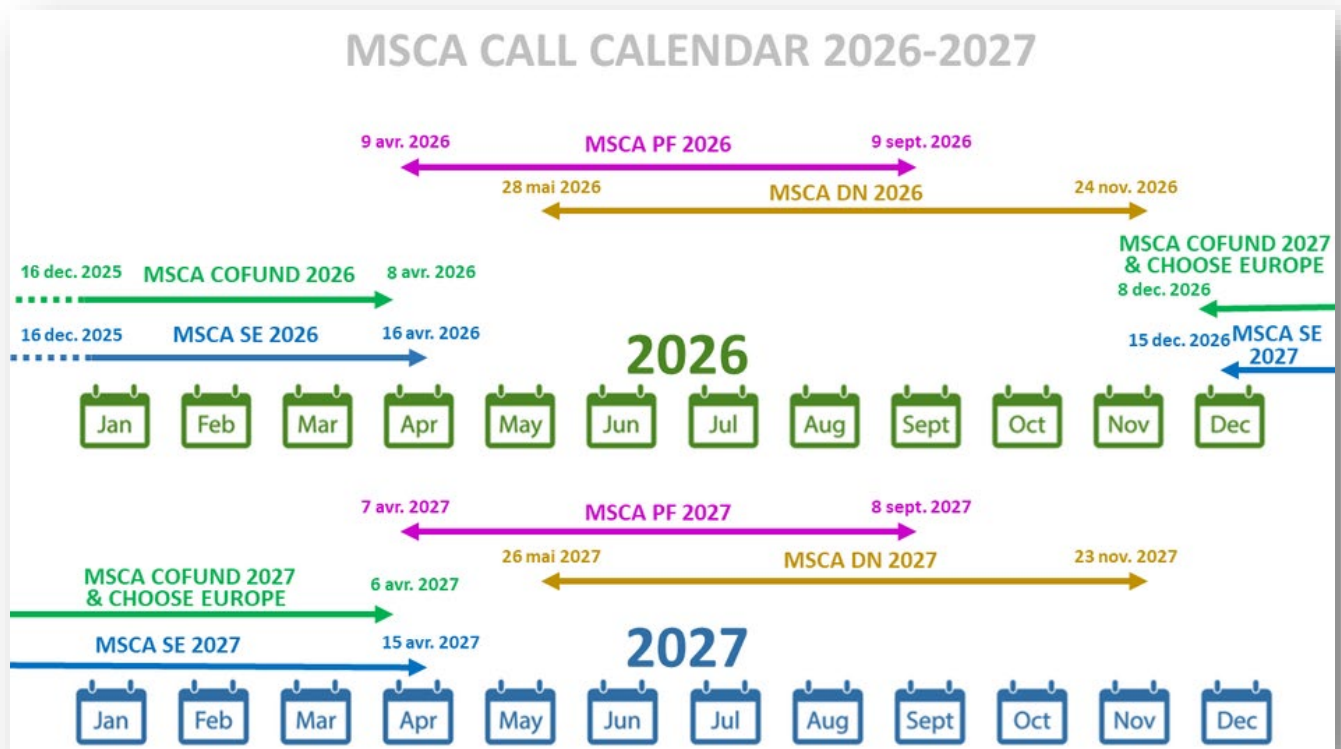
³ MSCA Supervision Guidelines <https://marie-sklodowska-curie-actions.ec.europa.eu/about-msca/guidelines-on-supervision>

⁴ Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment <https://www.coara.org/agreement/the-agreement-full-text/>

⁵ Programme de travail AMSC 2026-2027 : les nouveautés <https://www.horizon-europe.gouv.fr/programme-de-travail-amsc-2026-2027-les-nouveautes-42527>

For the 2026 funding cycle, the call timetable is as follows:

- COFUND runs from 16 December 2025 to 8 April 2026 with a budget of €105.46 million;
- Staff Exchanges runs from 16 December 2025 to 16 April 2026 with €97.92 million;
- Postdoctoral Fellowships runs from 9 April 2026 to 9 September 2026 with €399.05 million;
- Doctoral Networks runs from 28 May 2026 to 24 November 2026 with a budget of €593.03 million.



Source: <https://www.horizon-europe.gov.fr/programme-de-travail-amsc-2026-2027-les-nouveautes-42527>

For 2027, the indicative call pages are already available and show the continuation of the main MSCA portfolio:

- Staff Exchanges 2027 is currently scheduled for 15 December 2026 to 15 April 2027 with an indicative budget of €95.04 million;

- COFUND 2027 is scheduled for 8 December 2026 to 6 April 2027 with €51.25 million;
- Choose Europe for Science 2027 is also listed for 8 December 2026 to 6 April 2027, again with €51.25 million;
- Postdoctoral Fellowships 2027 is expected from 7 April 2027 to 8 September 2027 with €388.57 million;
- Doctoral Networks 2027 is scheduled from 26 May 2027 to 23 November 2027 with €574.62 million.

INCREASED UNIT COSTS AND COUNTRY CORRECTION COEFFICIENTS

For MSCA DN projects, the living allowance has increased from EUR 4,010 per month to EUR 4,250 per month.

For MSCA PF projects, it has increased from EUR 5,990 per month to EUR 6,350 per month. As a reminder, a country correction coefficient applies to the living allowance in MSCA DN and PF projects.

For MSCA SE projects, the top-up allowance for one month of secondment has increased from EUR 2,710 to EUR 2,870.

For MSCA COFUND projects, the COFUND allowance increases from EUR 3,300 to EUR 3,500 per month for a Doctoral Programme, and from EUR 4,700 to EUR 4,980 per month for a Postdoctoral Programme.

The unit contributions for the MSCA Choose Europe for Science call are also modified. During the EU-funded phase, the Choose Europe for Science allowance of EUR 6,700 per month is replaced by a series of unit contributions: a living allowance of EUR 6,350, a mobility allowance of EUR 710, a family allowance of EUR 660, and institutional contributions of EUR 1,650 per month. A country correction coefficient applies to the living allowance, aligning it with MSCA PF projects.

The **country correction coefficients** have also been revised. For example, the correction coefficient for Romania decreases from 70.7% to 72.6%¹.

“CHOOSE EUROPE FOR SCIENCE” ACTION

The clearest flagship novelty is the integration of Choose Europe for Science into the 2026–2027 MSCA framework, with a dedicated 2027 call carrying an indicative budget of €51.25 million. There will be no MSCA Choose Europe for Science call in 2026¹.

The MSCA Choose Europe for Science 2027 call will replace the MSCA COFUND Postdoctoral Programme 2027 call, but not the MSCA COFUND Doctoral Programme.

The scheme is designed to address brain drain and precarity by supporting projects in which organisations recruit postdoctoral researchers with a view to employment beyond the project period.

The most distinctive feature is that applicant organisations will also be assessed on the longer-term professional perspectives they offer, not only on the scientific quality of the project⁶.

This action also brings a different implementation logic from the more traditional MSCA schemes. The Work Programme states that each programme must recruit at least three researchers; the fellowships are designed around two phases, with the EU contribution covering the one phase and the beneficiary ensuring complementary funding for the other phase; and the maximum duration is 60 months for a 48-month fellowship or 72 months for a 60-month fellowship, including recruitment time.

The inclusion of Implementing Partners will be possible. The maximum funding per beneficiary per call increases to EUR 5 million, and it will be possible to reverse Phase 1 (funded by the EU) and Phase 2 of the project¹.

⁶ MSCA Choose Europe for Science 2027 call <https://marie-sklodowska-curie-actions.ec.europa.eu/funding/msca-choose-europe-for-science-2027>

MSCA DOCTORAL NETWORKS ACTION

One novelty for this action is that for doctoral candidates recruited by beneficiaries based in third countries eligible for EU funding, there is no longer an obligation to be enrolled in a doctoral programme in an EU Member State or a Horizon Europe Associated Country. Enrolment in a doctoral programme in the third country is now sufficient.

Another novelty, applied also for MSCA PF, COFUND and CEfS projects, is that secondments are now limited to one half (1/2), rather than one third (1/3) of the duration of the contract (or of the outgoing phase for MSCA PF Global Fellowships projects).

RAISE Pilot - Doctoral Networks for AI in Science⁷ brings an additional EUR 30 million budget, coming from Cluster 4, that will fund DN projects on the reserve list in the field of AI for science. In order to apply for the RAISE Doctoral Networks call, applicants must submit their proposal to the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions (MSCA) Doctoral Networks. At proposal stage, applicants will be able to declare their interest in being considered for the RAISE Doctoral Networks and, if so, they should demonstrate that their proposal falls within the scope of the RAISE call.

MSCA STAFF EXCHANGES ACTION

The most practical action-level simplifications appear in MSCA Staff Exchanges. According to the official 2026 call page⁸ and the Work Programme, the new rules now allow same-sector exchanges within EU Member States and Horizon Europe Associated Countries, whereas the action still remains strongly intersectoral overall.

⁷ RAISE Doctoral Networks for AI in Science (RAISE pilot) call <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/HORIZON-RAISE-2026-01-03?isExactMatch=true&status=31094501,31094502,31094503&frameworkProgramme=43108390&callIdentifier=HORIZON-RAISE-2026-01-MSCA&order=DESC&pageNumber=1&pageSize=50&sortBy=startDate>

⁸ MSCA opens €97.9 million call for Staff Exchanges <https://marie-sklodowska-curie-actions.ec.europa.eu/whats-new/news/msca-opens-eu979-million-call-for-staff-exchanges>

The previous one-third limit tied to interdisciplinarity has been removed, which reduces proposal-design complexity. So, interdisciplinary secondments between two countries located in the EU or in countries associated to Horizon Europe, and involving organisations from the same sector, are now unlimited.

An MSCA SE consortium must now mandatorily include at least one partner from the academic sector and one partner from the non-academic sector in order to be eligible.

At the same time, the programme makes skills development more explicit: proposals should now clearly explain how secondments will expose staff to different skills, working cultures, or career trajectories.

Another useful simplification is the removal of the former “one-month rule” before the first secondment. This gives beneficiaries more flexibility in planning exchanges.

However, some core rules remain unchanged: secondments must still be physical, not virtual, and must still be carried out full-time.

The minimum consortium structure also remains essentially stable: at least three independent organisations in three different countries, with participation from both the academic and non-academic sectors.

Overall, the MSCA Work Programme 2026–2027 shows both continuity and adjustment. Continuity comes from the sustained support for the flagship MSCA actions and their bottom-up, excellence-based approach across disciplines. Adjustment comes from the stronger emphasis on research careers, longer-term prospects for researchers, and simplification of rules where possible, especially in collaborative schemes such as Staff Exchanges. In that sense, the new programme not only continues to fund research through mobility and training, but also places greater attention on the quality, attractiveness and sustainability of research careers in Europe.

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