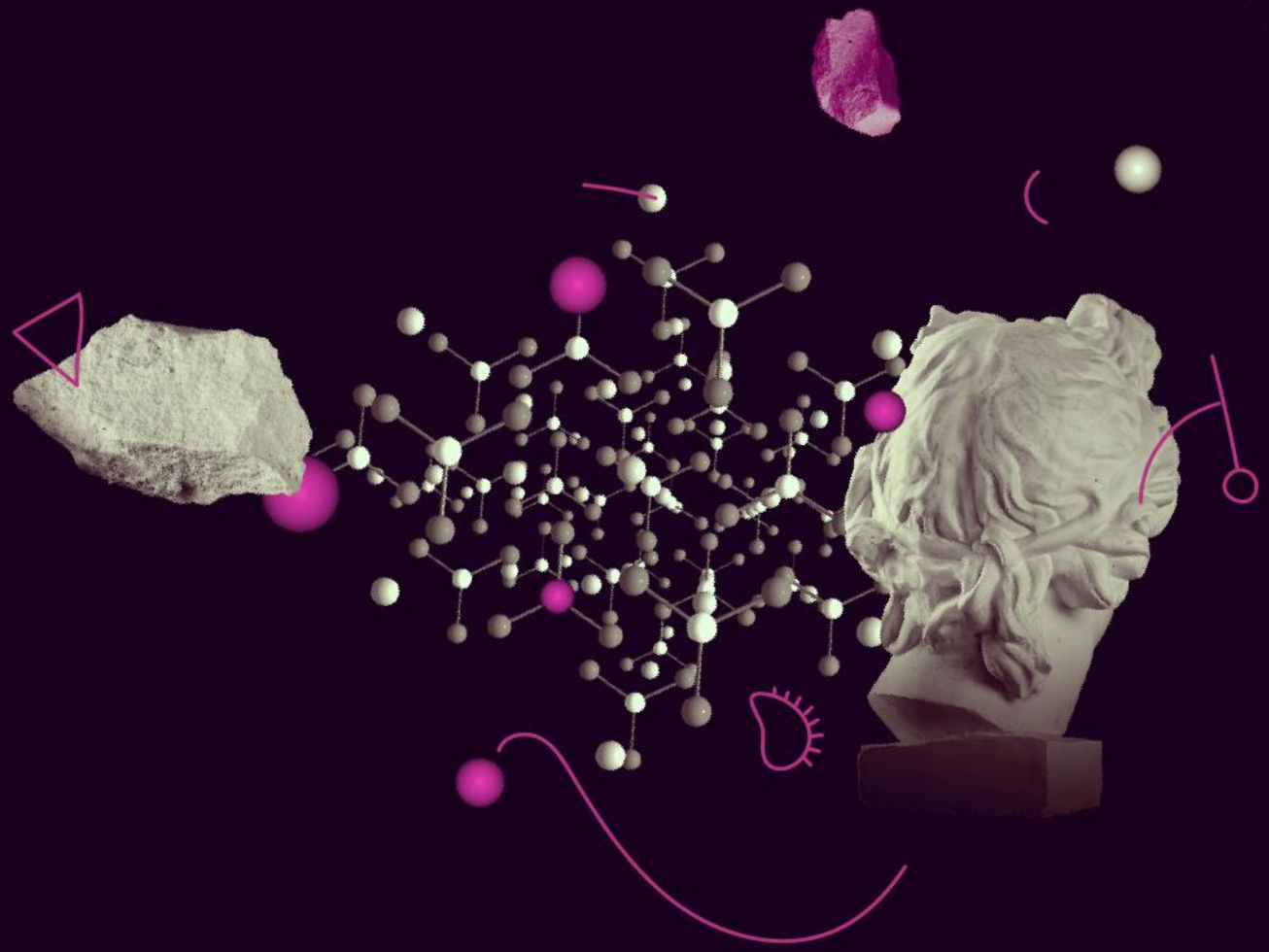
MSCA

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions

Developing talents, advancing research



Informative session: all about MSCA Staff Exchange2023

26th October 2023

Leila TRIKI
Tunisian MSCA National Contact Point

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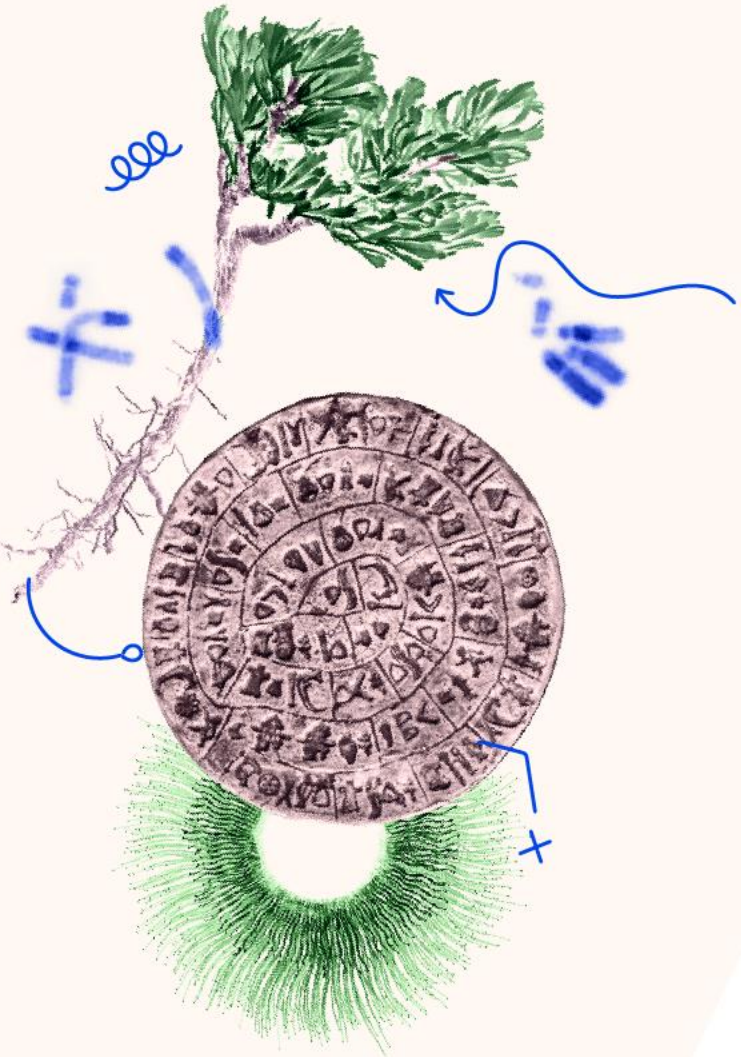

Plan

MSCA quick overview

MSCA Staff Exchanges

Practical Considerations

MSCA Guidance

Reminders

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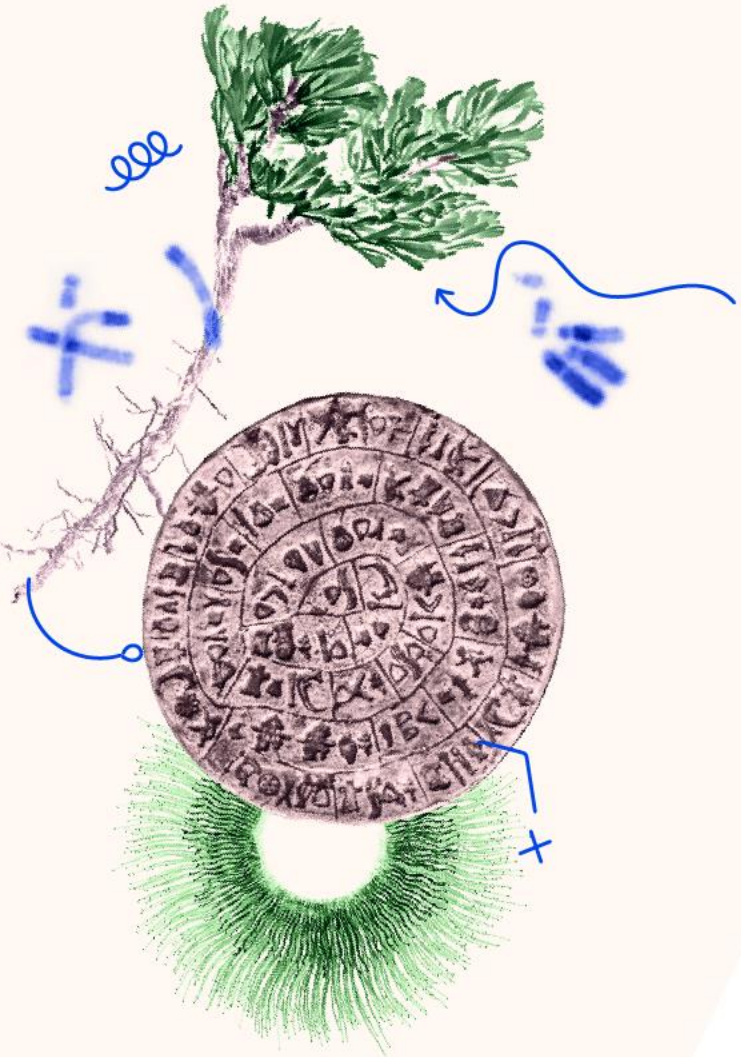
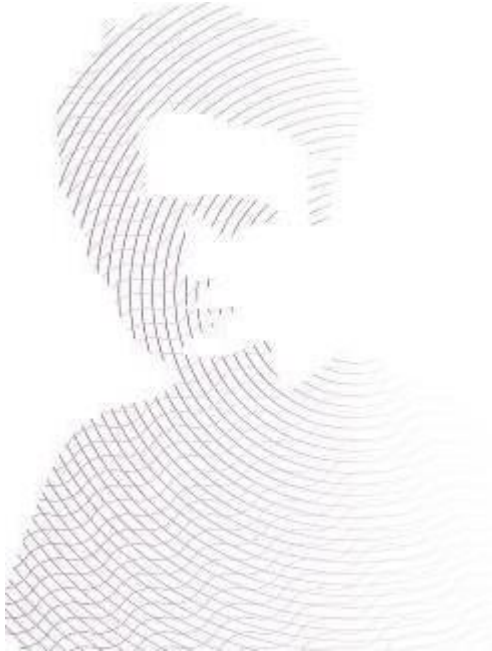


Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA)

Quick Overview



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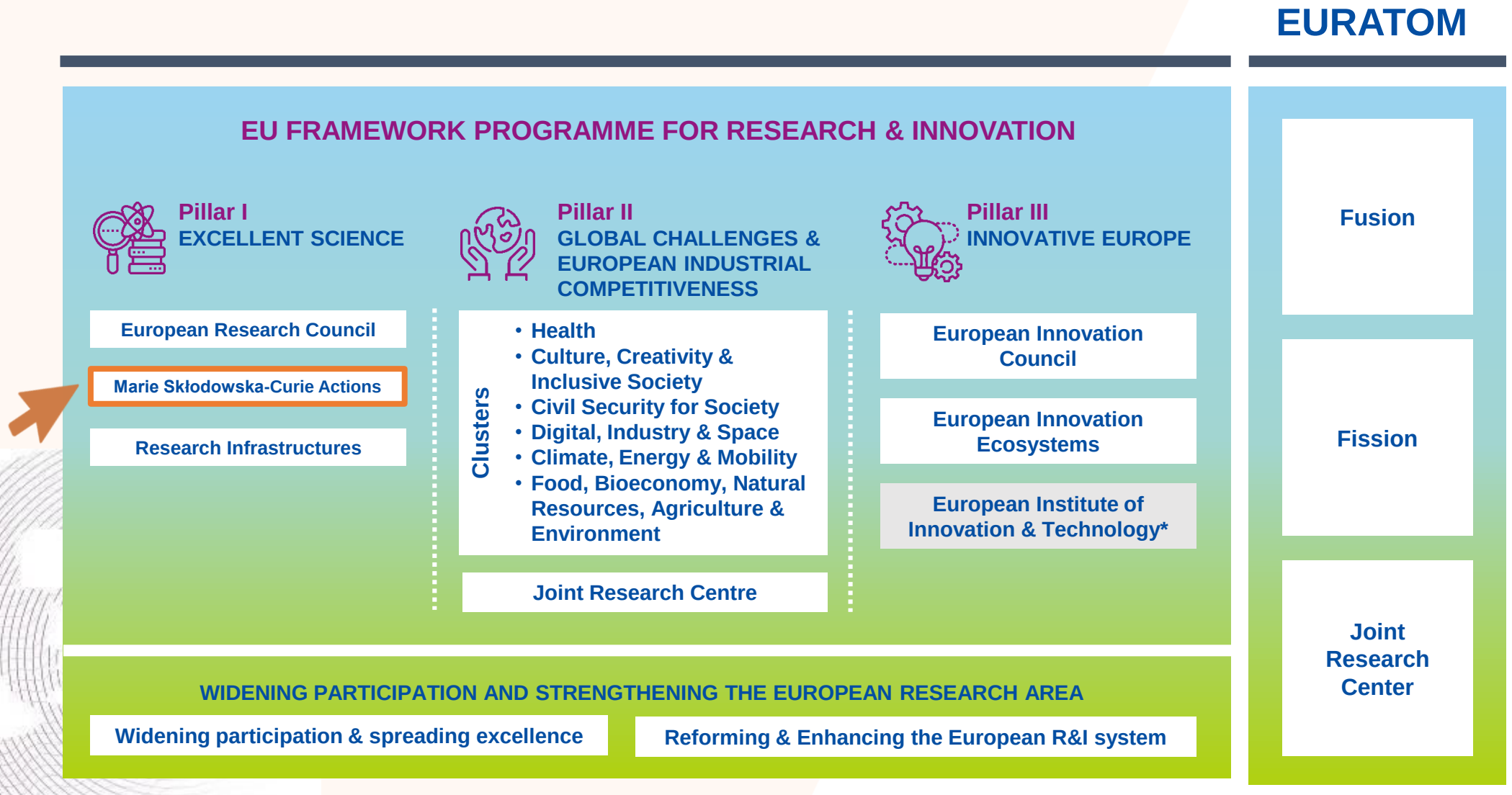
What Does Horizon Europe Look Like?



Budget: EUR 95.5 billion

Pillar I: Excellent Science

Reinforcing and extending the excellence of the Union's science base

European Research Council

Frontier research by the best researchers and their teams

€16 billion

Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions

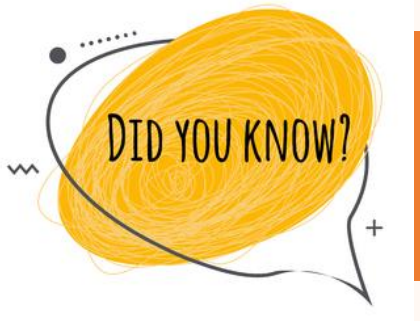
Equipping researchers with new knowledge and skills through mobility and training

€6.6 billion

Research Infrastructures

Integrated and inter-connected world-class research infrastructures

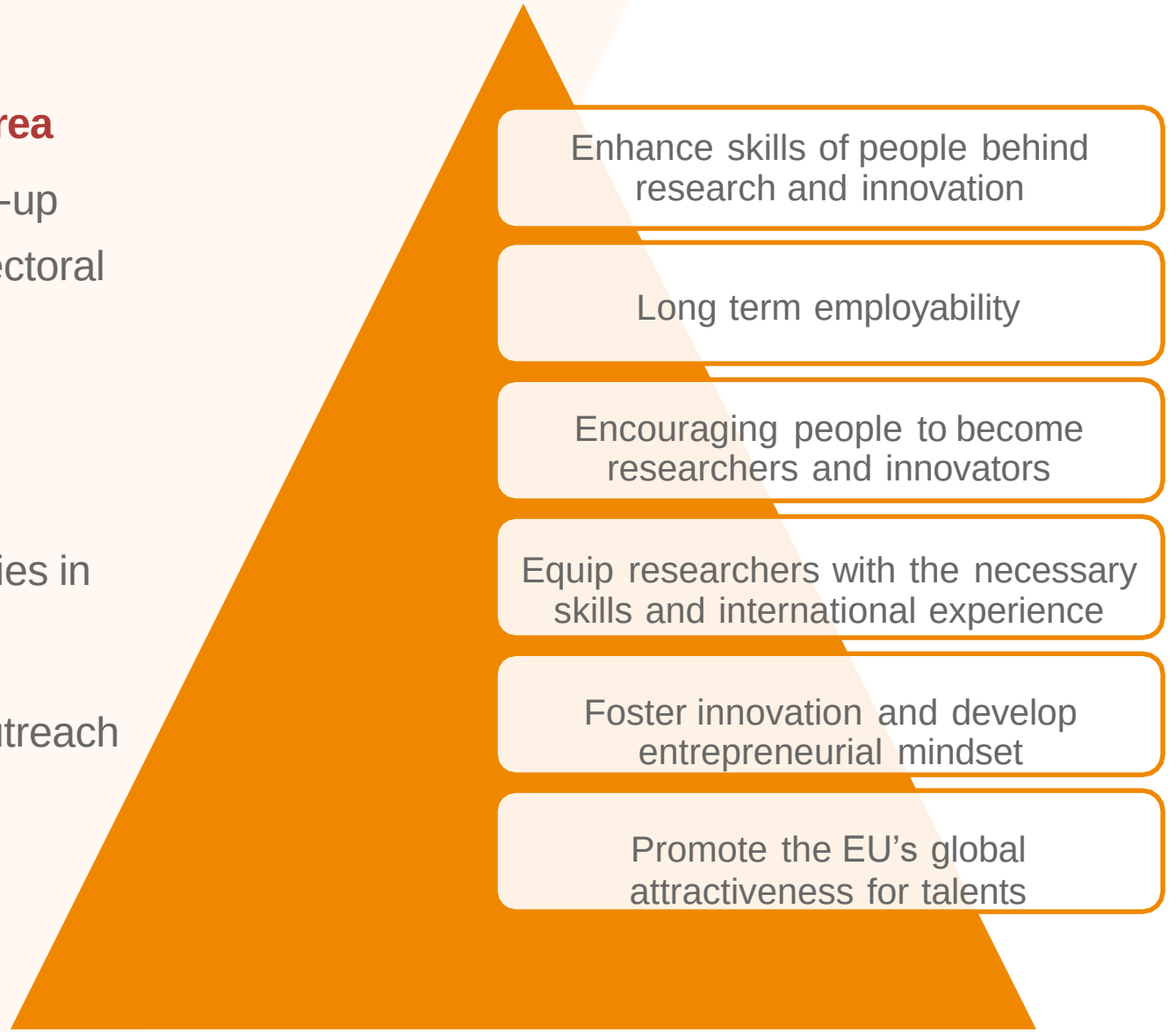
€2.4 billion



12 Nobel Prize winners either backed by or involved in the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions between 2012 and 2020

MSCA Key Features

- Operates on a ‘bottom-up’ basis – **any subject area**
- From basic research through to near market take-up
- 3 I approach to mobility - interdisciplinary, intersectoral and international
- Enhance skills of people behind research and innovation
- Gender Friendly and Inclusive – equal opportunities in the research content
- Dissemination and public engagement - public outreach



Key features

Researchers' training, skills and career development (all stages of career)

Excellent research in all domains (bottom-up approach)

International, cross-sectoral & interdisciplinary mobility

Attractive working and employment conditions

Structuring impact on organisations through excellent programmes

Strong collaboration beyond academia

MSC Actions

Doctoral Networks

- Supports doctoral programmes, developed by universities, research institutions and research infrastructures, businesses including SMEs, and other socio-economic actors from different countries across Europe and beyond.

Postdoctoral Fellowships

- Enhances the creative and innovative potential of researchers holding a PhD.

Staff Exchanges

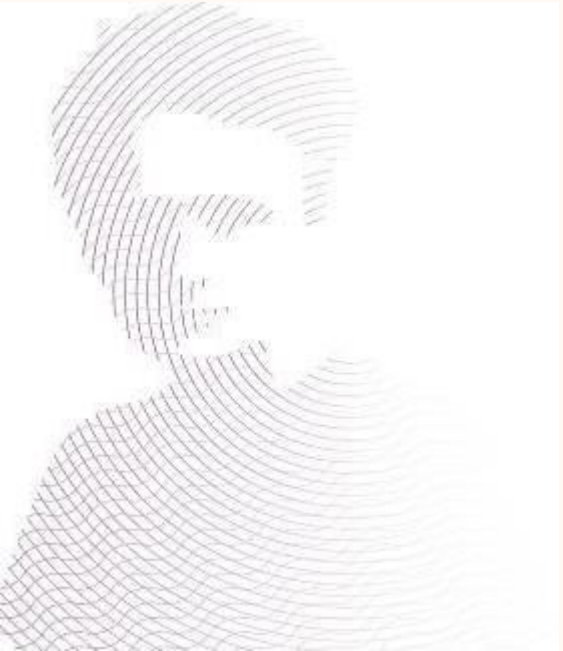
- **Promote innovative international, inter-sectoral and interdisciplinary collaboration in research and innovation.**

COFUND

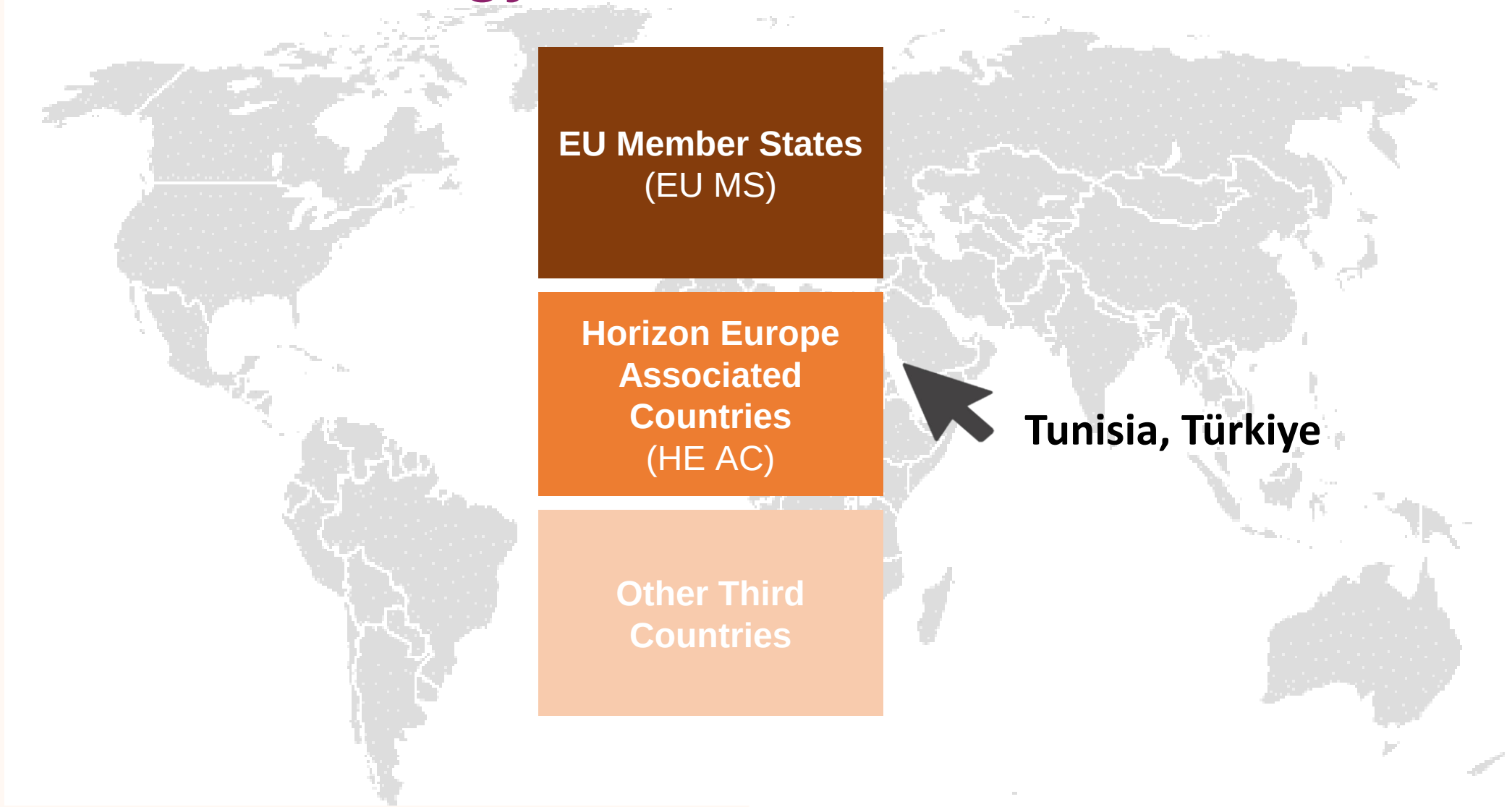
- Co-finances new or existing doctoral programmes and postdoctoral fellowship schemes.

MSCA and Citizens

- Aims to bring research and researchers closer to the public at large, to increase awareness of research and innovation activities and to boost public recognition of science and research education.



Some terminology



Beneficiary vs Associated Partner

Beneficiary

- Signs the Grant Agreement with the EU
- Minimum number and geographical requirements
- Receives funding directly

Associated partner

- Does not sign the Grant Agreement
- Contributes to the action (e.g. hosts staff or researchers)
- Does not directly receive funding

Organisations vs individuals

Organisation

- Legal entity
- From academic or non-academic sector
- Beneficiary or associated partner

Individual researcher

- Any nationality
- Any topic/field
- Mobility is required
- Specific conditions depending on which action

Participation of third country organisations

Organisations from third countries can participate as:

MSCA Action	Beneficiary	Associated Partner
Doctoral Networks	Yes*	Yes
Staff Exchanges	No	Yes
Postdoctoral Fellowships	No	Yes
COFUND	No	Yes

*Beneficiaries can be established in low- and middle-income non-associated countries included in the list of countries eligible for funding provided in the Horizon Europe Programme Guide

Participation of third country individuals

Individuals from third countries can participate in all MSCA actions

MSCA Action	Eligible	Where to look for vacancies
Doctoral Networks	Yes	EURAXESS
Staff Exchanges	Yes	Sending institution
Postdoctoral Fellowships	Yes	Find host organisation / EURAXESS
COFUND	Yes	EURAXESS

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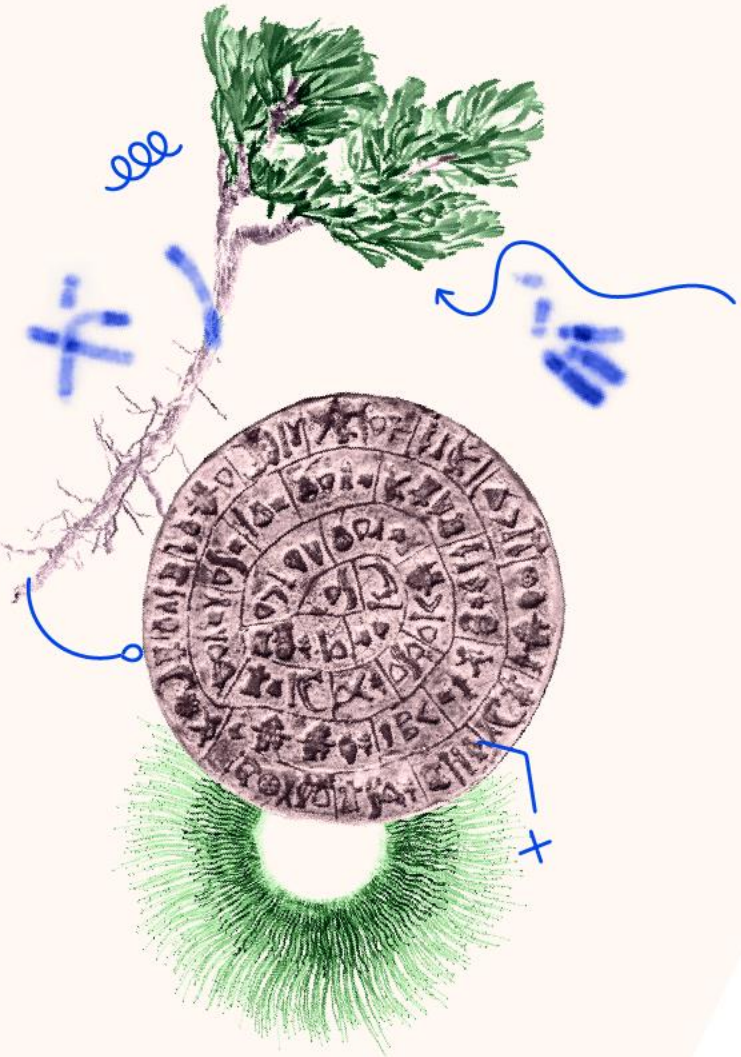
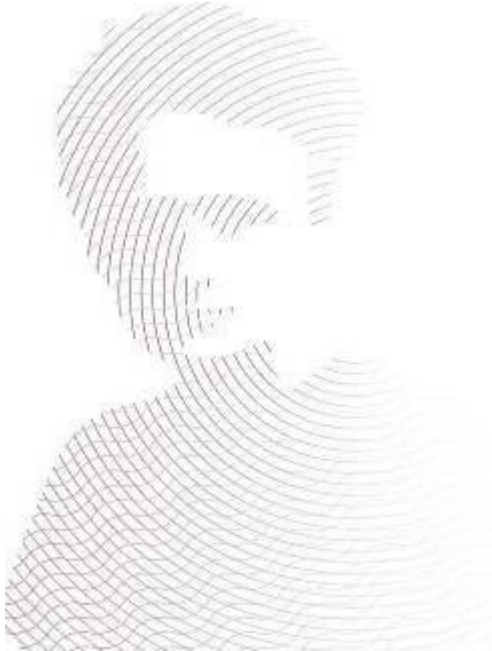


MSCA Staff Exchanges

HORIZON-MSCA-2023-SE-01



MSCA Staff Exchanges

Collaborative R & I project implemented through secondments

Building new & developing existing networks & collaborations

Increasing global cooperation

Increasing collaborations between sectors (including SMEs)

Enhancing knowledge transfer between participants

Building long-term collaborations

Developing research and transferable skills

Supporting long-term employability

Encourages three dimensions of mobility: inter-sectoral, international and interdisciplinary

- Funds basic research through to near market actives across all sectors
- **Maximum duration is 4 years, 360 person months**

Expected Impact

Benefits of Getting Involved

Staff Members

- Develop transferable skills and competencies
- Increase employability and career prospects
- Develop entrepreneurial mind-sets
- Enhanced networking and communication capacities
- International exposure
- Enhance existing and build new collaborative networks

Organisations

- Transfer of knowledge
- Increase R&I capacity
- Develop and build sustainable international partnerships with partners all over the world
- Build and enhance intersectoral relationships
- Innovative ways of cooperation and transfer of knowledge between sectors and disciplines

Eligible Participants

Any legal entity established in the academic or non- academic sector.

Consortium minimum:

- 3 different legal entitles established in 3 different countries
- 2 of which must be based in different EU member states or associated countries
- If the organisations are from the same sector, at least 1 must be from a Third Country

Academic sector

- Public or private higher education establishments awarding academic degrees, public or private non-profit research organisations and International European Research Organisations (IERO)

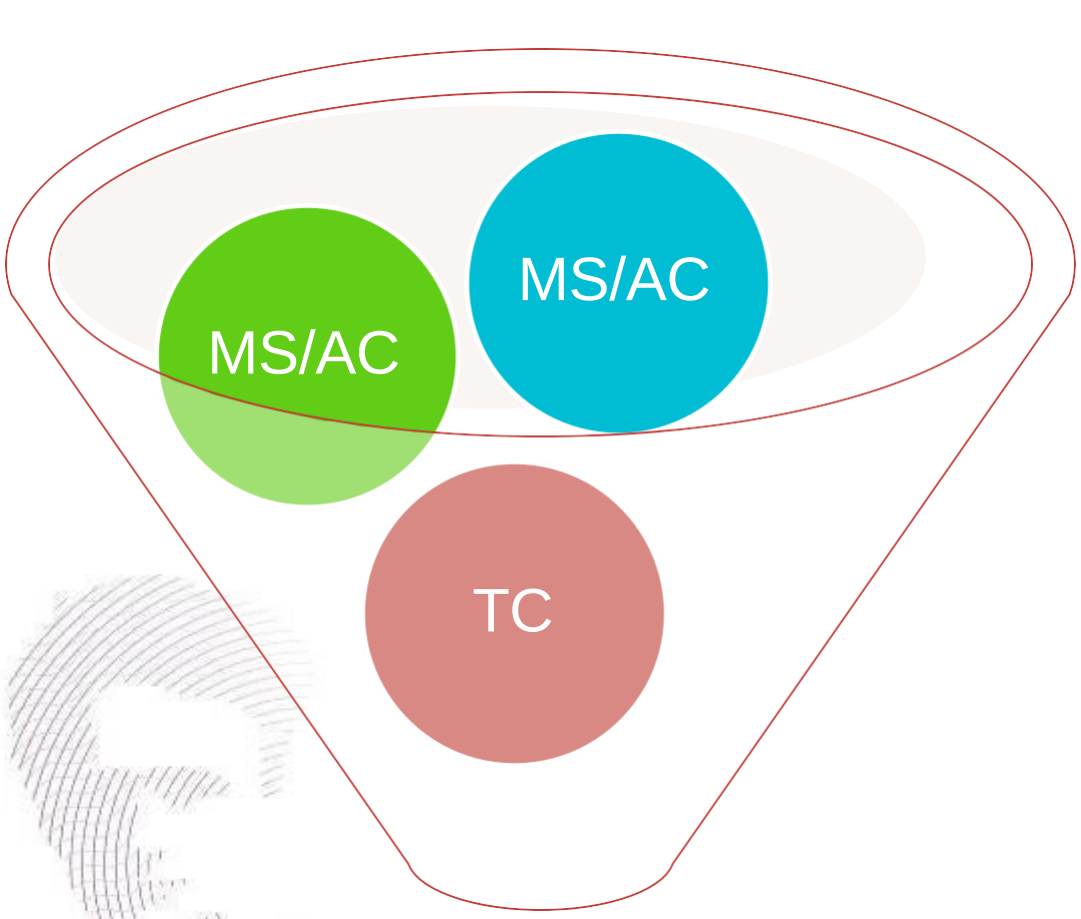
Non-academic sector

- Any socio-economic actor not included in the academic sector and fulfilling the requirements of the Horizon Europe (HE) Rules for Participation

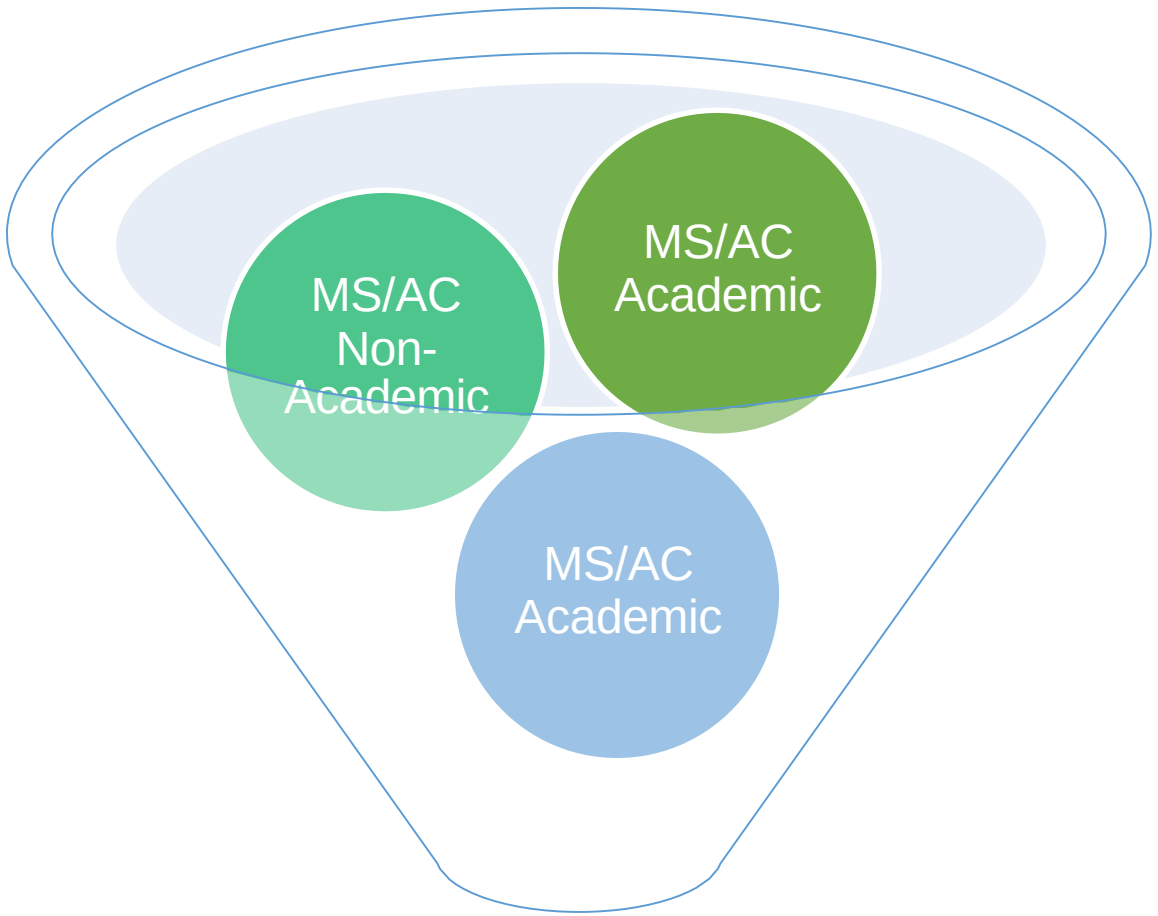
Academic vs Non-Academic

- Determined by EC during the validation process
- Important to check with the organisation in advance to understand which sector they are in.

Consortium Composition



Staff Exchange



Staff Exchange

Consortium Composition

No ‘typical’ consortium size

- Range from 3 to > 20 organisations
- Depends on the need of the individual project
- Two types of participants: beneficiaries and associated partners
- Recommended between 6 to 10 organisations
- Number of associated partners should be reasonable and in-line with project size

Beneficiary

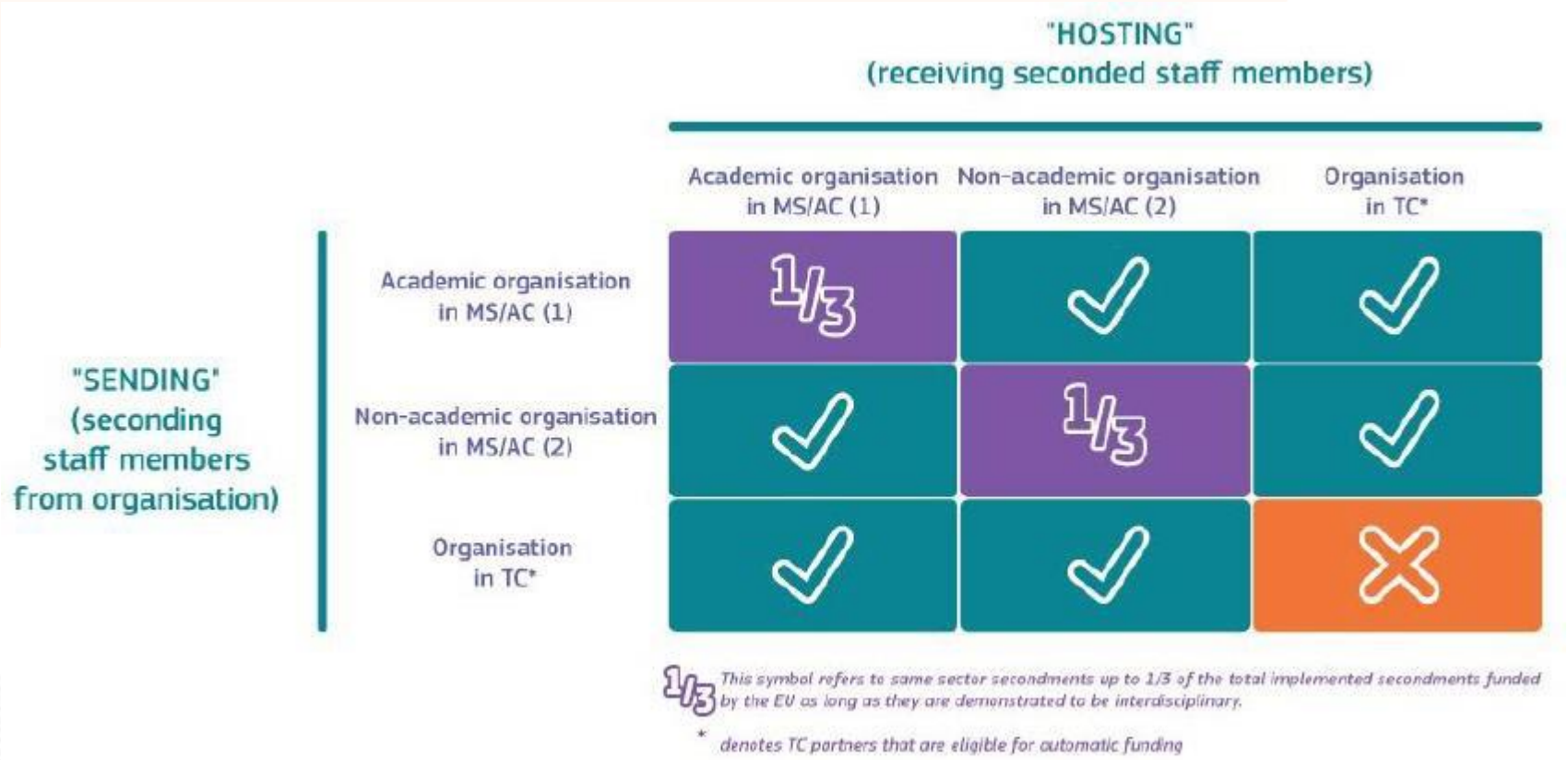
- Located in a EU Member State or associated country
- Can send staff on secondments
- Can host seconded staff
- Can provide training opportunities

Associated partners

- Located in a Third Country (TC)
- Can host seconded staff
- Can provide training opportunities
- Can send staff on secondments (specific funding eligibility rules apply)

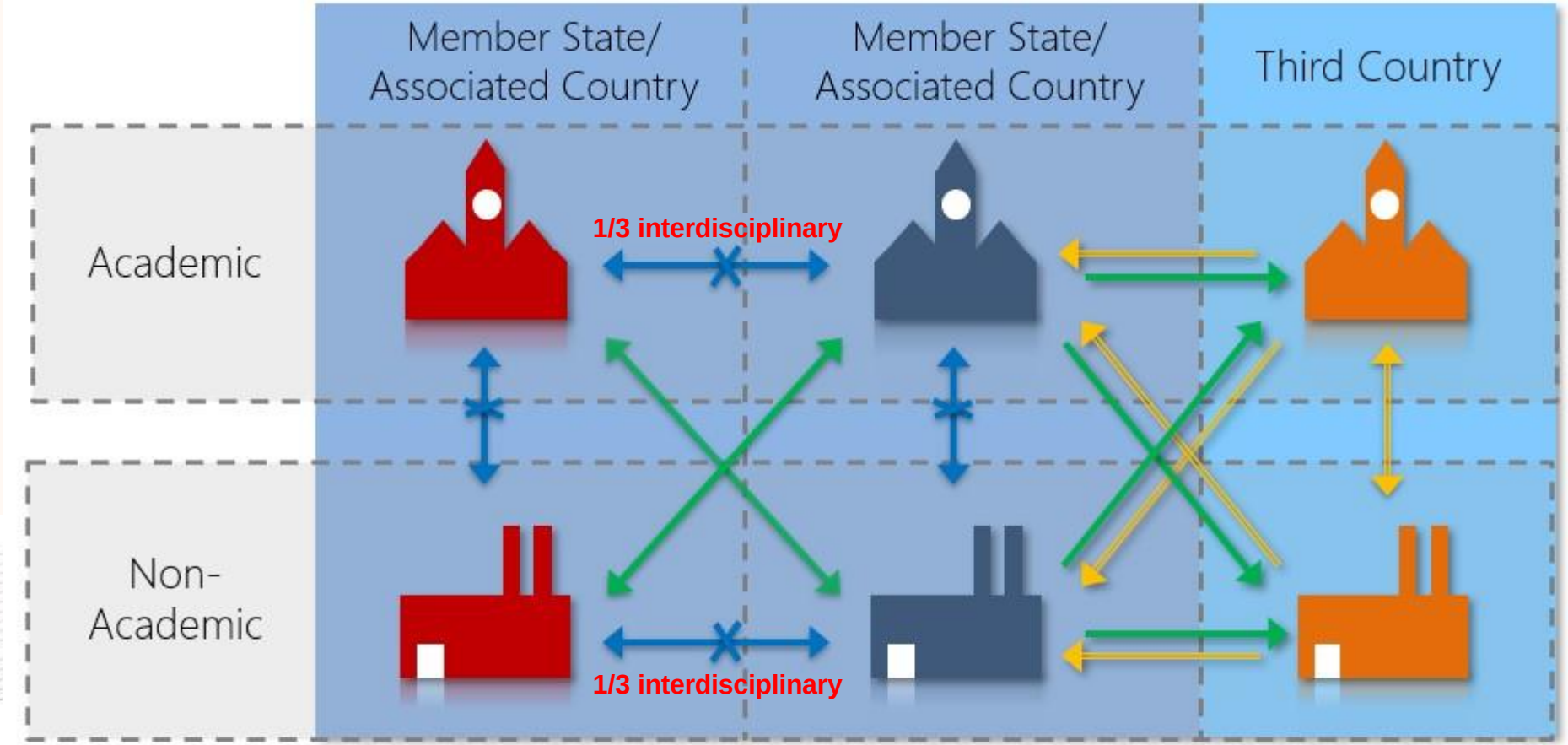
Secondment Eligibility (for EC Funding)

- TC participants from low- to middle-income countries are automatically eligible for EC funding
  - Other TC participants will need to provide their own funding to support seconded staff



- up to 1/3 of the total secondments EC funded can be between Member States/Associated Countries within the same sector.

Secondment Eligibility



Minimum of three countries (MS/AC/TC)
Secondments must be intersectoral or outside EU
Any staff members/researchers/students can be seconded

EU Funded

Invalid Secondments

3rd Country Funded Secondments

The secondments

Key Features

- A secondment must last between 1-12 Months
- Counted from the day of departure to the day of return
- At least one month must be completed, after which funding is pro-rata
- A secondment may be split into several stays with one or several beneficiaries or associated partners
- Staff must work full time on secondment, even if normally they work part time.
- An in-built return mechanism must be foreseen
- Can be in different reporting periods (but only claim in one)

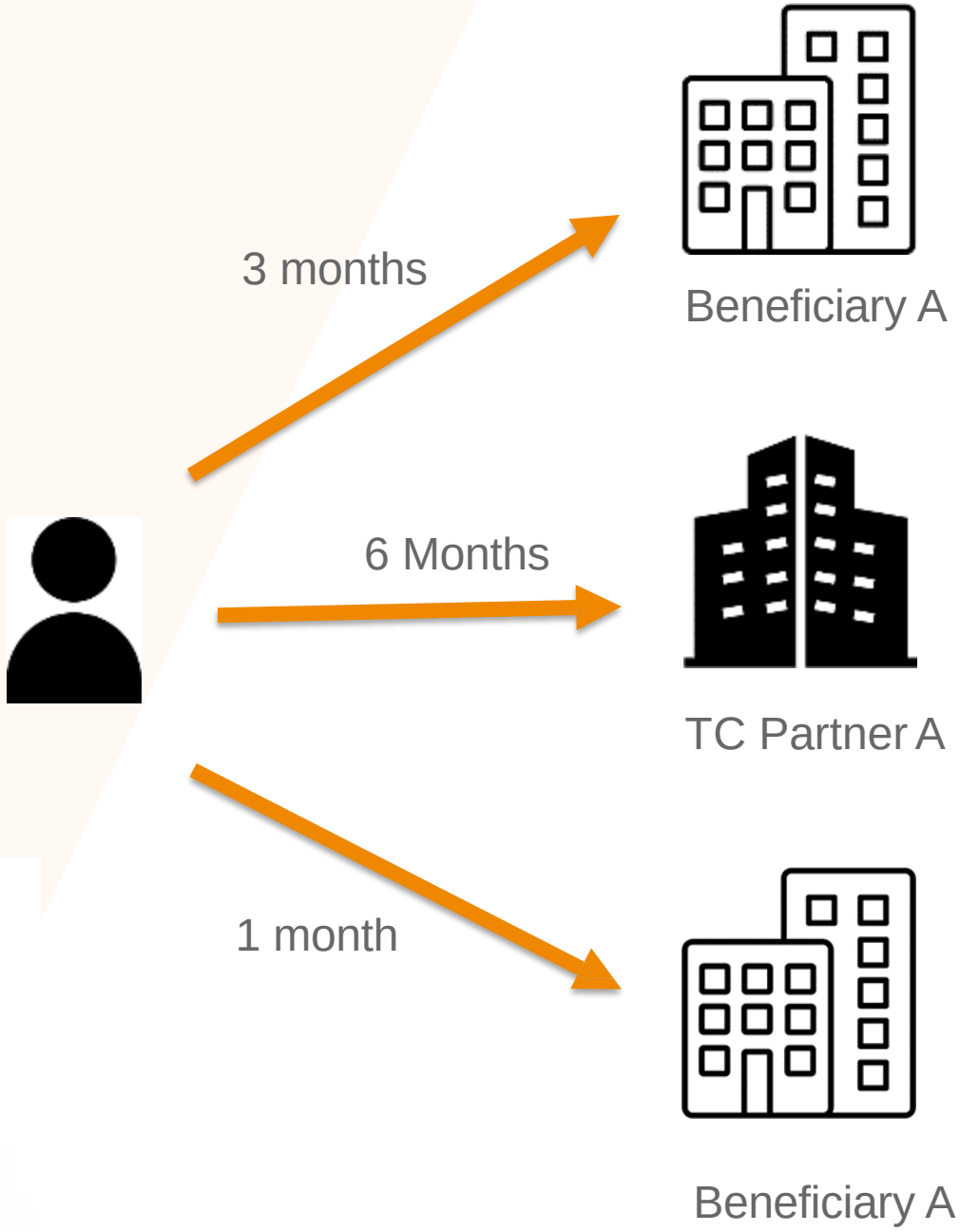
Secondments:

- From a MS/AC institution to a TC institution – any sector
- From academic to non-academic institution in a MS/AC
- From non-academic to academic institution in a MS/AC
- From a TC institution to MS/AC institution - any sector
- Between MS/AC institution in the same sector - must be interdisciplinary (max 1/3)

Split secondment

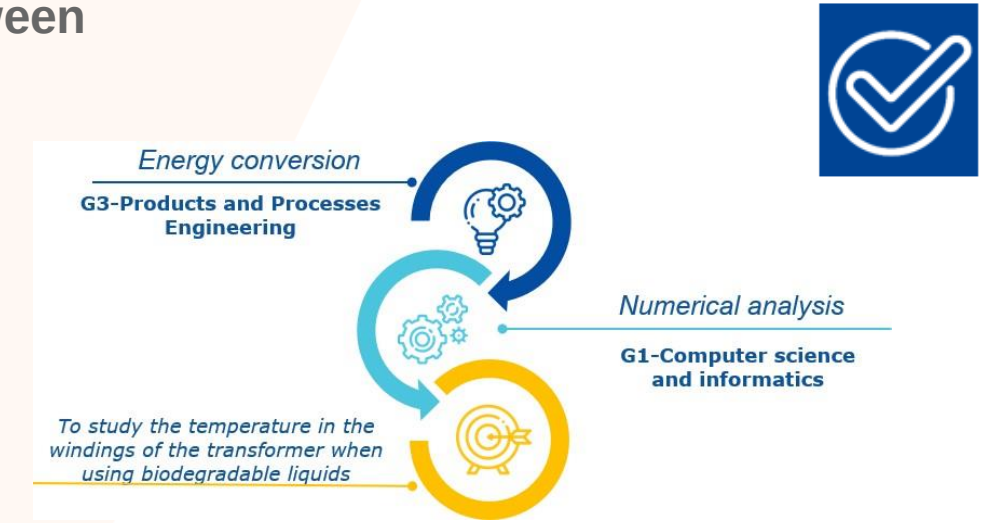
Can be split between one or several beneficiaries or associated partners

- Must still respect the maximum and minimum duration rule
- All the secondments must take place within the duration of the action
- At least one month must be completed, after which funding is pro-rata



Interdisciplinary Secondments

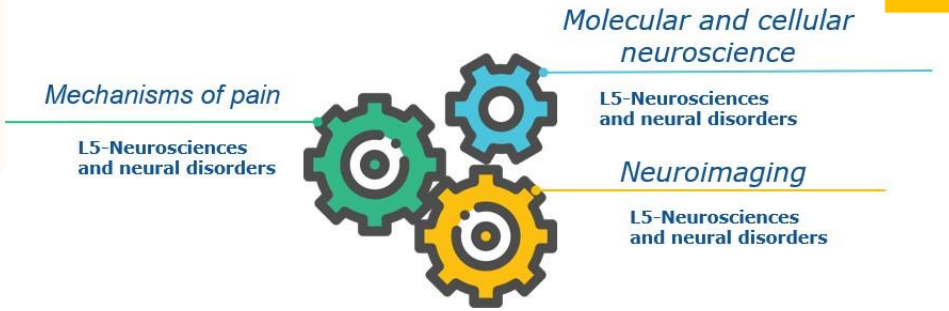
Up to 1/3 of the total secondments funded by the EU can be between different Member States/Associated Countries within the same sector (academic or non-academic) if they are interdisciplinary.



Considered interdisciplinary if:

- The activities undertaken during the secondments are **from two or more different scientific disciplines**
  - Based on the level 1 MSCA key words used in part A of the proposal
    - *Look at the level 2 key words and then look at which level 1 key word they fall under*
    - *Dedicated FAQ 17021*

Scientific panel	Level 1 keywords	Level 2 keywords
Chemistry (CHE)	C1-Inorganic Chemistry	Catalysis Coordination chemistry Inorganic and nuclear chemistry NMP Non-Metallic Materials & basic processes Organometallic chemistry Radiation and nuclear chemistry
	C2-Organic, Polymer and Molecular Chemistry	Carbonhydrates Combinatorial chemistry Heterocyclic chemistry Macromolecular chemistry Molecular architecture and structure Molecular biology Molecular chemistry Natural product synthesis Organic chemistry Organic reaction mechanism Peptide chemistry Polymer chemistry Stereochemistry Supramolecular chemistry Synthetic Organic chemistry
	C3-Physical and Analytical Chemistry	Analytical chemistry Chemical instrumentation Chemical reactions: mechanisms, dynamics, kinetics and catalytic reactions

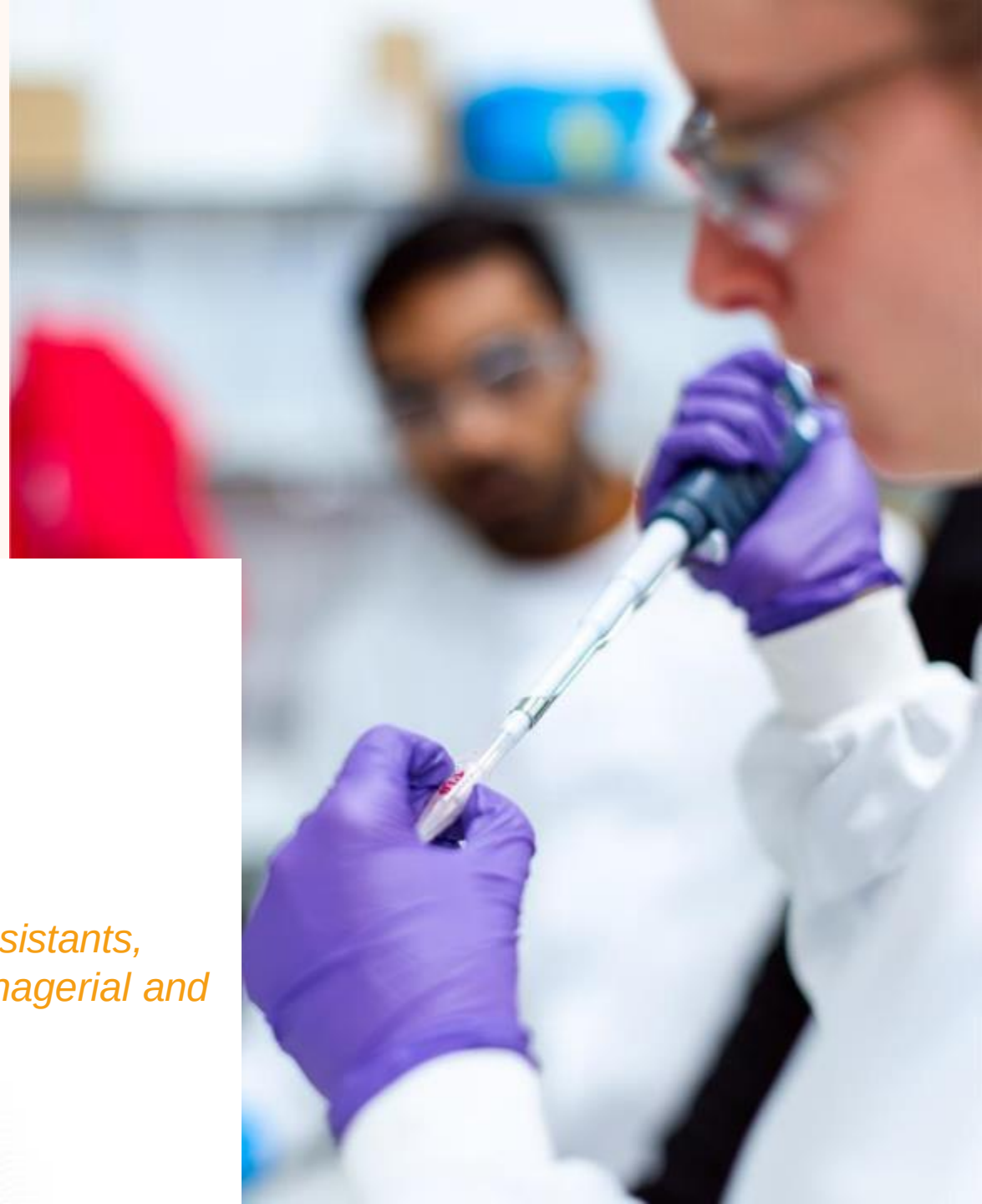


Secondee Eligibility

Staff going on secondment must meet specific criteria

- Be under the direction and instructions of the sending organisation for the duration of the secondment
- Actively engaged in or linked to research/innovation activities for at least 1 month prior to first secondment (pro-rata for part time)
- Have the appropriate experience to undertake the activities
- Must work full time while on secondment

E.g. PhD students, technical staff, research assistants, postdoctoral researchers, senior researchers, managerial and administrative etc



What is funded

Maximum EC funding: 360 person months

- Funding based on:
  - unit cost multiplied by person months spent on secondments
- No detailed financial reporting
  - report on completed secondment months
- Ensure all participants understand the financial rules

EC Funding – Staff member unit cost

At least one month must be completed, after which funding is pro-rata (counted from the day of departure to the day of return)

Contributions for recruited researchers Per person-month		Institutional unit contributions Per person-month	
Top-up Allowance	**Special Needs Allowance**	**Research, training and networking contribution**	**Management and indirect contribution**
EUR 2 300	**Requested unit x (1/number of months)**	**EUR 1300**	**EUR 1000**

- **Top-up allowance** for the seconded staff member **contributes to travel, accommodation and subsistence costs related to the secondment.**
  - Employers MUST continue to pay staff member's salary during their stay abroad.
- **Special Needs Allowance** contributes to the additional costs for the acquisition of special needs items and services for staff members with physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments
  - EUR 3 000, EUR 4 500, EUR 6 000, EUR 9 500, EUR 13 000, EUR 18 500, EUR 27 500, EUR 35 500, EUR 47 500 and EUR 60 000

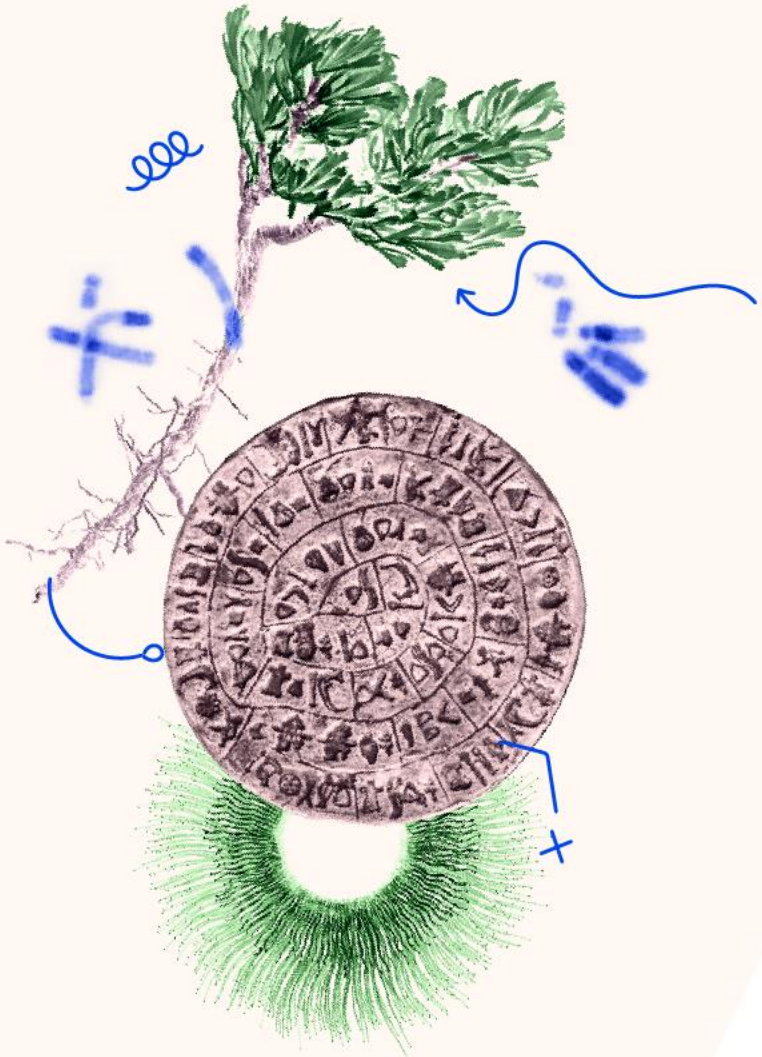
EC Funding – Institutional Costs

Institutional costs depend on implementation of secondments

Contributions for recruited researchers Per person-month		Institutional unit contributions Per person-month	
Top-up Allowance	Special Needs Allowance	Research, training and networking contribution	Management and indirect contribution
EUR 2 300	Requested unit x (1/number of months)	EUR 1300	EUR 1000

- **Research, training and networking unit cost**, contributes to the costs for training, transfer of knowledge and networking activities, as well as research expenses
- **Management and indirect unit cost** contributes to the beneficiary's costs in relations with the action
  - generally 'top-sliced' by the coordinator to cover network wide activities
    - The amount will be agreed by the consortium

➢ *Institutional unit costs can be transfer to the associate partner. The amount and how this works will be decided and agreed by the both organisations.*



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Practical Considerations

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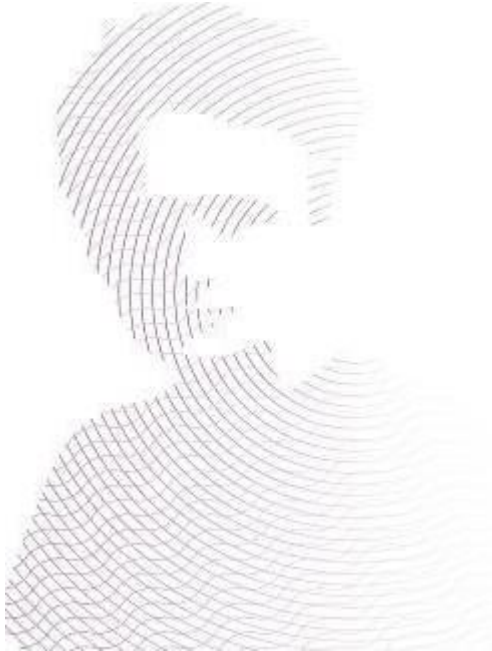


Letters of Commitment

- **Failure to include a letter of commitment can result in the proposal being ineligible or the Associated Partner being excluded**

- Requirement for Associated Partners
- The letter must be up-to-date and on headed paper
- It should confirm real and active participation in the proposed action
- General guidelines are given
- They can take time to get signed

Operational capacity of the organisations

- Include **all relevant information** in the tables in this section
    - Profile of key staff, description of key infrastructure or technical equipment, all partner organisations contributing towards the proposed work (special attention to SMEs)
- Follow all formatting rules (Standard Application Template)

Declaration of costs

- Beneficiaries declare all costs in individual financial statements for:
  - Outgoing secondments of its own staff
  - Incoming secondments from a TC partner (if eligible for funding)

- Beneficiaries must complete a mobility declaration for:
  - Outgoing secondments of its own staff
  - Incoming secondments from a TC partner (if eligible for funding)

*If you are hosting staff from partner Third Country organisations eligible for funding, **you are responsible** for declaring costs linked to incoming secondments.*

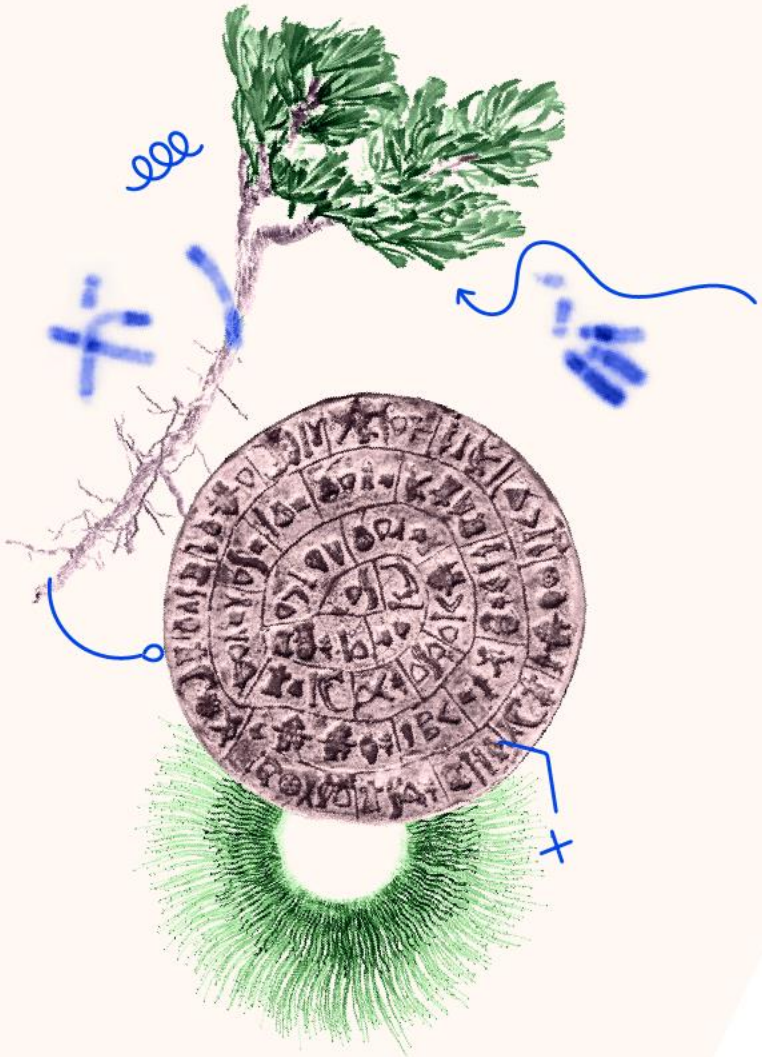
Check the eligibility of seconded staff members.

Retain evidence for potential audit.

Agreements (CA)

In addition to the grant agreement, parties will need to produce a consortium agreement, as well as agreements with the associated partners.

- No official templates, normally prepared by coordinator
- Unofficial templates, based on DESCA Model Consortium Agreement:
  - LERU template for ITNs (could be adapted for SE):
  - BAK template for ITNs (could be adapted for SE):
- IPR Helpdesk – IP in MSCA Factsheet
- Can include AP in the CA or have a secondary agreement



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MSCA Guidance

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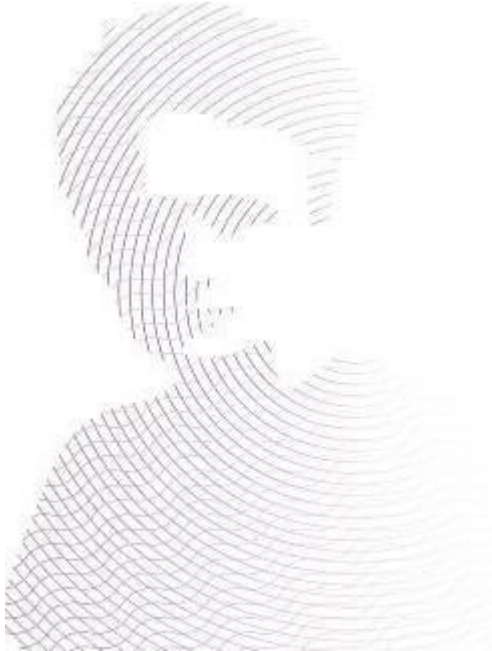


MSCA Guidelines for Supervision

A non-exhaustive list of recommendations, complemented by other activities, that are expected to be implemented on a best-effort basis.

Emphasise the importance of sufficient training and professional development for supervisors

Emphasise the need for transparent procedures to facilitate conflict resolution in the event of disputes

Direct references to MSCA Green Charter

https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/bb02d56e-9b3c-11eb-b85c-01aa75ed71a1/language-en

MSCA Green Charter

Set of guiding principles

Aim to raise awareness, encourage best practice, empower fellows

Sets out to reduce the carbon footprint of MSCA projects, increase awareness on environmental issues, promote sustainable behaviours and policies

Will be reporting requirement but NOT part of evaluation criteria

Will be supported by additional guidance material, case studies, tools and a dedicated FAQ

https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/2bfbb0d9-9b3c-11eb-b85c-01aa75ed71a1/language-en

Guidelines for Inclusion of Researchers at Risk

All MSCA applicants and beneficiaries are encouraged to take measures to facilitate the participation of these researchers in MSCA-funded projects.

- Provides useful background on researchers at risk and recommend ways to improve their recruitment
- Sets out recommendations on measures to follow to increase access for researchers at risk
- Are not part of the beneficiaries' contractual obligations
- should not compromise the nature of the MSCA programme

Inspireurope
Supporting Researchers at Risk

https://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions/about-msca/guidelines-for-inclusion-of-researchers-at-risk

Attractive Working and Employment Conditions

Good Research Environment

Declaration on Sustainable Researcher Careers

A joint declaration on sustainable researcher careers

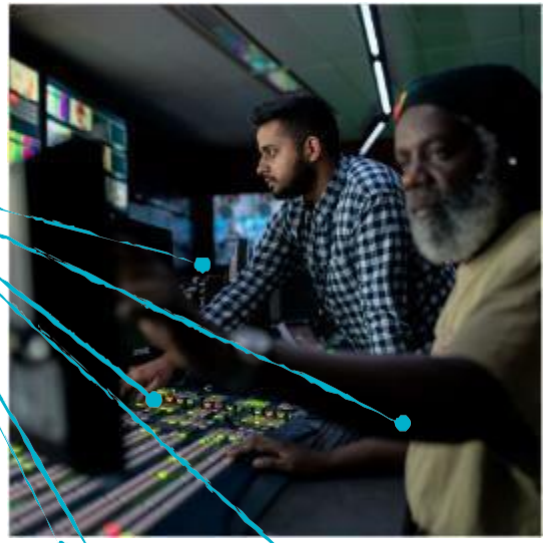
By Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA) and the European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers (Eurodoc)

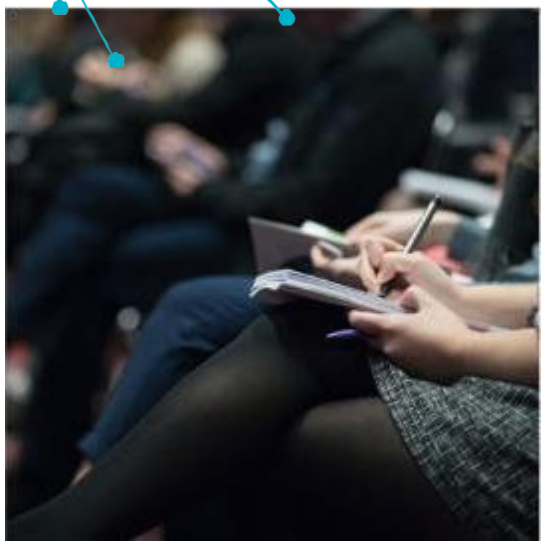
The European Charter for Researchers

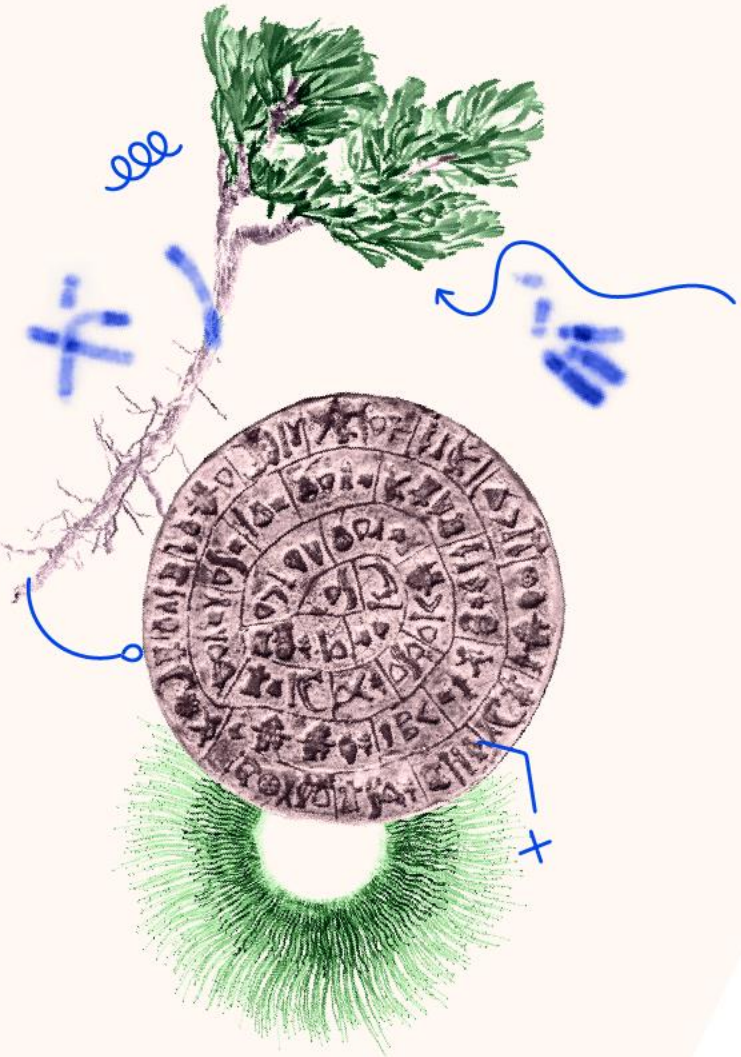
Is a set of general principles and requirements which specifies the roles, responsibilities and entitlements of researchers as well as of employers and/or funders of researchers

The Code of Conduct for Recruitment

Set of general principles and requirements that should be followed by employers and/or funders when appointing or recruiting researchers







Reminders

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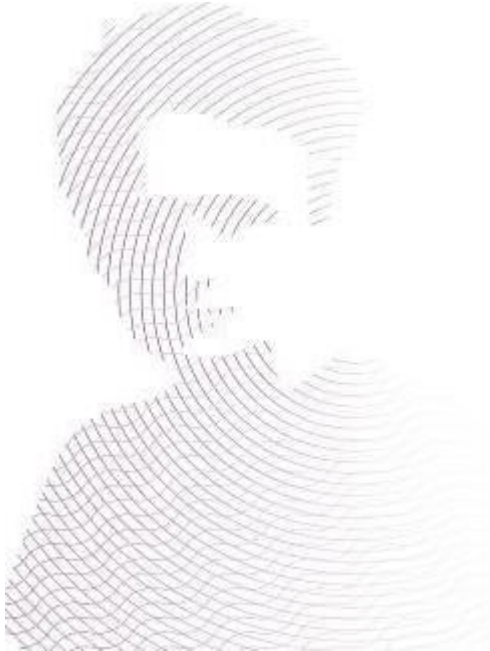

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The Call Timeline

Launch of the call for proposals	5 October 2023
Deadline for applicants to submit proposals	28 February 2024
Notification of applicants if their proposal has been selected	June/July 2024 **(TBC)**
Grant agreement signature for successful projects	November 2024 **(TBC)**
First EU-funded projects start	November 2024 **(TBC)**

Proposal Advice

- Read all call documentation and the evaluation criteria
- Closely follow the call requirements
- Be in line with the action’s objectives and expected outcomes
- Describe the benefits of cooperation and how they can go beyond this project
- Make it easy for the evaluators to find the information
- Use clear and concise language
- Include diagrams, images, tables if appropriate
- Research previous and current projects
- Find colleagues to proof read drafts with the evaluation criteria
- Consider any relevant EU policy documents

Reviewers feedback

Positive feedback

- Innovation and credibility are convincingly presented and are supported by a very detailed presentation of the state of art relevant to the project goals
- The approach of knowledge transfer to the seconded researchers is very precisely described in terms of the type of knowledge to be transferred, knowledge providers and beneficiaries, and includes all sectors
- The quality of the interactions between the participating organisations is convincing
- The project addresses the expected impacts of the call very well. The tools to achieve this, instruments and the measures are clearly outlined and well described
- The training programme enhances knowledge transfer and skills, boosts the academic prospects of the researchers and, working in close collaboration with industrial partners, the career perspectives.
- The proposal will contribute positively to develop long-lasting research collaborations between EU and AP building on already existing links.
- The participation of the industrial partners will result in close academia-industry collaborations and commercially-driven project ideas
- The work plan and the activities proposed to reach the project objectives are well conceived and convincing
- Gender aspects in the planning of the activities are duly considered
- IP generated under this project will be carefully managed and the strategy takes carefully into account development perspectives of the industrial partner

Reviewers feedback

Negative feedback

- The methodologies proposed within such a diverse partnership are not sufficiently detailed
- The participants' interactions are not properly presented in terms of content and contribution to the project's objectives
- The project research methodology is not properly developed and lacks details as regards risk assessment, milestones and outcome
- The expected additional research skills to be developed within academics are not well demonstrated, and this fact limits the perspectives for the career development of the researchers
- The measures for disseminating the results have been presented only in general terms
- The proposed communication and dissemination measures are mainly based on conferences and papers and their objectives are not sufficiently described with reference to the project activities
- The project work plan proposed is not sufficiently detailed: deliverables are not appropriately measurable; the secondments and partners allocated to each task are not properly described; with interconnections between the work packages missing, and limited detail regarding the scheduling of tasks
- The complementarity of the participating organizations is not adequately discussed. The overall project offers a scheme characterized by a strong prevalence of one partner without a clear demonstration of the coordination with other partners
- The risk management and contingency plans are outlined only briefly and are insufficiently specified for a project of this size
- Secondments are not sufficiently specified or balanced between participants

Key Messages From Today

Staff Exchange is not only about secondments, you need a research and training project – be realistic about the budget

Put yourself in the shoes of the evaluators – make their life easy…

Follow the Guide for Applicants!

Resources

- **MSCA How to Apply** https://rea.ec.europa.eu/funding-and-grants/horizon-europe-marie-sklodowska-curie-actions/horizon-europe-msca-how-apply_en#ecl-inpage-293
  - Guide for Applicants
  - MSCA Work Programme
  - Dedicated FAQs
  - Instructions on how to complete the template
  - MSCA Keywords
- **Call page** https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/horizon-msca-2023-se-01-01
- **General Work Programme** https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2023-2024/wp-1-general-introduction_horizon-2021-2022_en.pdf
- **Horizon Europe** https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/programme-guide_horizon_en.pdf
- **List of Participating Countries in Horizon Europe** https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation_horizon-euratom_en.pdf

Looking for a host organisation?

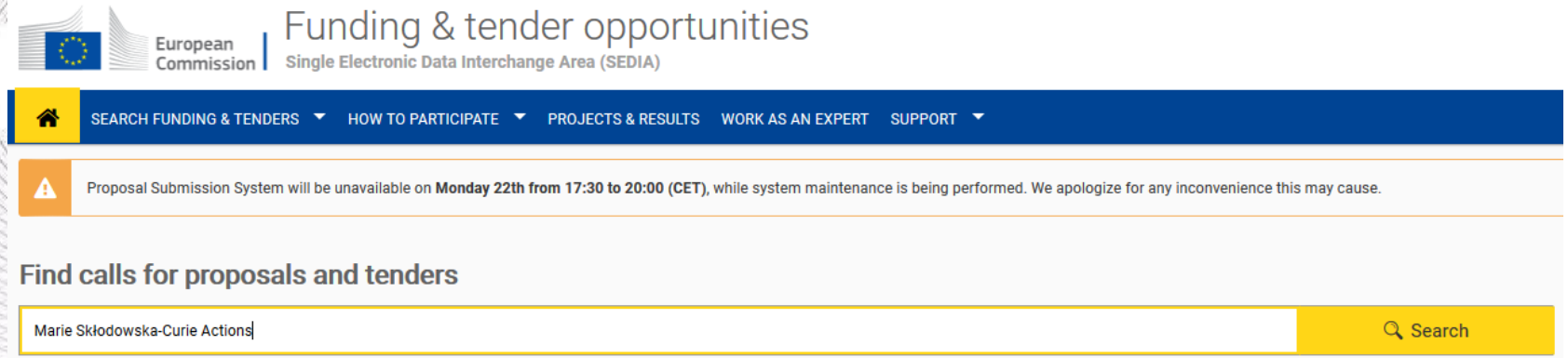
Some useful resources and links

- Vacancies under MSCA Doctoral Networks and COFUND programmes are published on the Euraxess portal (as well as some offers from host institutions for Postdoctoral Fellowships)
- **NEW ! :** MSCA-Net's MSCA Matchmaking platform for researchers and organisation to find relevant partners and host institutions
- "*Partner search*" tool on Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal
- Enterprise Europe Networks (for non-academic partners)

Funding opportunities

- All calls are published on the **Funding and Tender Opportunities Portal**
- Applications are submitted through the portal:
  - Find your call
  - Sign in to the portal and register your organisation (get a PIC number)
  - Find partners
  - Apply

https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/



Other useful links

- **Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Website**

  https://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions/node_en

- **Factsheet, Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions, 2021-2027**

  https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/128028

- **Funding and Tenders Portal (applications, documents, partner search)**

  https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/programmes/horizon

- **Horizon Europe MSCA Work Programme 2023-2024**

  https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2023-2024/wp-2-msca-actions_horizon-2023-2024_en.pdf

- **European Charter and Code for Researchers**

  https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/charter-code-researchers

- **MSCA Guidelines on Supervision**

  https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/508311

- **MSCA Green Charter**

  https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/720690

@MSCActions

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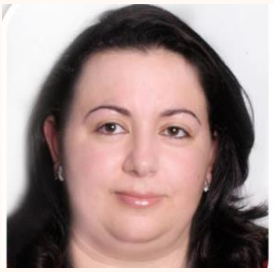

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Thank you!

#MSCA #HorizonEU

@MSCActions

https://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions/

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