

# Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Postdoctoral Fellowships:

Practical tips on how to write a successful application

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# Outline



- UK Participation in Horizon Europe
- MSCA Policy Aims
- Practical Tips

# UK's Relationship with the EU

Horizon Europe Participation

# UK's Relationship with the EU



- On 24 December 2020, the UK Government announced the conclusions of the negotiations with the European Commission.
- Included [confirmation](#) that the UK will associate to Horizon Europe, which covers the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions (MSCA)
- The intent is for the UK to associate in time to participate from the beginning of the programme
  - Commission Official, Signe Ratso, the Deputy DG for Research and Innovation recently provided re-assurance that it is also their expectation that UK entities will be eligible to participate in the first calls.
  - [European Commission Q&A](#): The UK is expected to soon become an associated country to the EU's R&I Framework Programme Horizon Europe.
    - The UK will therefore have the same rights and obligations as other countries associated to the Programme

# Postdoctoral Fellowships 2021



- UK institutions are **eligible as a Host organisation** for the European Fellowships
- UK institutions are **eligible as incoming Host organisations** for Global fellowships
  - UK institutions are NOT eligible as outgoing hosts for Global Fellowships
- UK organisations **can host secondments** and the optional non-academic sector **placement**
- Projects with a UK host organisation **will not be evaluated differently** by the European Commission.

# Sources of Further Information

- UKRO [website](#) provides latest information on UK participation
- EC [Q&A on UK's Participation](#) in Horizon Europe
- The official statements on the EU-UK relationship are available on a [dedicated European Commission website](#) and the [UK Government page](#).
- UK Government provides information on [EU Funded Programmes under the Withdrawal Agreement](#).

The screenshot shows a document header with the UKRO logo and the text 'UK Research and Innovation'. The main title is 'UK Participation in EU Programmes for Research, Innovation and Higher Education'. The text explains that UKRO maintains this factsheet to provide the latest information on UK participation in EU funding schemes. It mentions that the UK has announced its intention to associate to Horizon Europe subject to ratification of the overall deal and finalisation of the regulations. It also notes that the UK will provide similar opportunities for students to study and work abroad as the Erasmus+ programme and will include countries across the world. The document is dated 5 January 2021 and includes a footer with contact information for UKRO.

**UKRO**  
UK RESEARCH OFFICE

**UK Research and Innovation**

## UK Participation in EU Programmes for Research, Innovation and Higher Education

UKRO maintains this factsheet to provide the latest information on UK participation in EU funding schemes in research, innovation and higher education. It provides an overview of the opportunities and signpost stakeholders – both UK organisations and our partners in Europe, to relevant official documentation. You are invited to disseminate this factsheet within your institutions and to your European and international partners.

### UK participation in Horizon Europe and other EU programmes

As part of the [agreement reached between the UK and the EU](#), the UK has announced that it will associate to Horizon Europe subject to ratification of the overall deal and finalisation of the regulations. Association will give UK scientists, researchers and businesses access to funding under the programme on equivalent terms as organisations in EU countries. The next step is for both sides to formally adopt the full text of the agreement taking into account the finalised EU Programme Regulations.

The timeline for UK association is to be confirmed but draft text in the [EU-UK Declarations](#) sets out an ambition for the UK to associate to Horizon Europe in time to participate from the beginning of the programmes.

*"It is the Parties' firm intention that the Specialised Committee on Participation in Union Programmes will adopt the Protocols at the earliest opportunity to allow their implementation as soon as possible, in particular with the ambition that United Kingdom entities would be able to participate from the beginning of the programmes and activities identified, ensuring relevant arrangements and agreements are in place, insofar as possible and in accordance with Union legislation."*

The UK also reached agreement with the EU and Euratom to associate to the next Euratom Research & Training (R&T) Programme 2021-2025 subject to ratification of the overall deal and finalisation of the regulations.

A new [Turing scheme](#) starting in September 2021 will replace the UK's participation in Erasmus+. The programme will provide similar opportunities for students to study and work abroad as the Erasmus+ programme and will include countries across the world.

### UK participation in Horizon 2020

The [Withdrawal Agreement](#) means that the UK can continue to participate in EU programmes, including Horizon 2020, that are financed by the 2014-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) until their closure (i.e. for the lifetime of grants).

UK participants continue to receive EU grant funding for the lifetime of individual Horizon 2020 projects, including projects finishing after the transition period ends at the end of 2020.

UK scientists, researchers and businesses can continue to participate in and lead Horizon 2020 projects and apply for Horizon 2020 grant funding, including the [Horizon 2020 Green Deal Call](#) which closes on 26 January 2021.

Version: 5 January 2021 - The information is provided by the UK Research Office (UKRO) and reflects our current understanding. Please contact us [ukro@ukri.ac.uk](#) if you have any questions.

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# Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA)

Overview

# Horizon Europe



Excellent Science (Pillar 1):  
Reinforcing and extending the excellence of the EU's science base



# Policy Aims

## MSCA as a whole

- Equip researchers with the [necessary skills and international experience](#) for a successful career
- Develop [new knowledge](#)
- [Enhance the skills of people](#) behind research and innovation
- Ensure [research training is excellent](#) and innovative
- Ensure [attractive career and knowledge-exchange opportunities](#)
- Build [Europe's capacity](#) for research and innovation
- Develop [long-term career sustainability](#)
- Support [diversity and equal opportunities](#)
- Contribute to the [EU external policy objectives](#)

## Postdoctoral Fellowships (PF)

- Enhance the [creative and innovative potential](#)
- [Fostering excellence](#)
- Support [intersectoral, international and interdisciplinary mobility](#)
- Provide opportunities to [acquire and transfer new knowledge](#)
- Bridge and encourages exposure to the non-academic sector - [long-term career sustainability](#)
- Supporting the [return and \(re\)integration](#) of researchers from outside Europe and or those who had a career break
- [Support researchers displaced by conflict](#)
- Increase in [high impact R&I output](#) and greater [contribution to the knowledge-based economy and society](#)

# What are the evaluators wanting to see (Expected impact)

## Individual Researcher

- Increased set of skills
- Improved employability and career prospects
- New mind-sets and approaches to R&I
- Enhanced networking and communication capacities
- Experience of mobility and the benefits that it brings

## Host Organisation and Associated Partners

- Enhanced working conditions for researchers
- Enhanced quality and sustainability of research training and supervision
- Better transfer of knowledge between sectors and disciplines
- Feedback of research results into teaching and education

# Practical Considerations

Proposal Development

# More than *Just* a Research Project

## Knowledge exchange

- Between the fellow and host and any associated partners

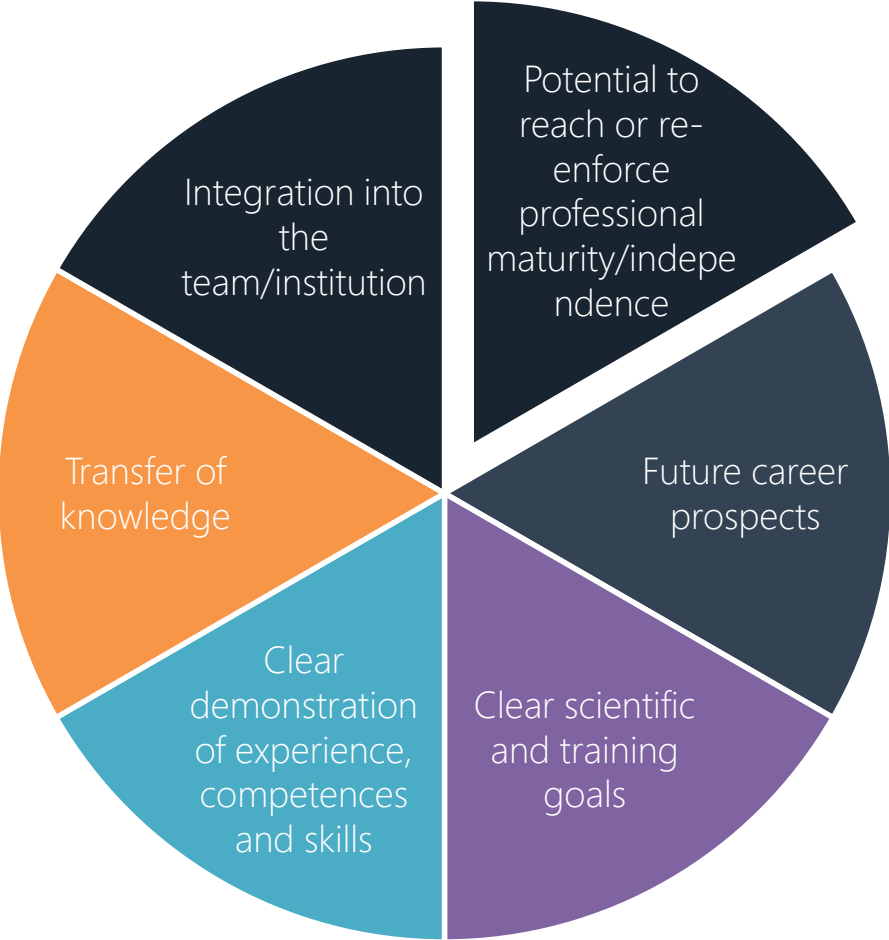
## Career development (training)

- **Research Skills:** core skills relating to your project.
- **Additional Research Skills:** research skills that will advance your competencies
- **Transferable & Complementary Skills:** the skills you acquire and transfer to future employment settings.

## Brings together

- Research and Training (**Training through research**)
- Researcher and Supervisor/host/associated partners/others

# The Project – The Researcher



# The Project - Scientific Element

Have a clear research question(s)

Novelty vs State of the art

Realistic and well-defined research objectives

highlight interdisciplinary, Intersectoral opportunities and or elements

Consider gender aspects & Open Science

Research Impact

Research objectives should link to methods

Link between research & training objectives

Exploitation, dissemination & communication

Where will activities take place and why

# The Project - Training Element

Have clear training needs

Training-through research

Realistic and well-defined career advancement objectives

Interdisciplinary  
& Inter-sectoral  
experience

Long term  
employability  
(Personal  
impact)

widen the  
competences  
of the  
researcher

Link between  
research &  
training  
objectives

Based on  
research  
needs of the  
project

Includes  
transferable  
skills

Links to the  
quality of the  
supervision  
and two way  
transfer of  
knowledge

Where will the  
activities take  
place and why

# Typical Training Examples

## Examples of transferable skills

- Entrepreneurship & innovation
- Grant writing
- Patent applications
- IPR Management and Patenting
- Leadership/Influencing courses
- Project management
- People management
- Presentation skills
- Public engagement
- Ethics in Research (RRI)
- CV preparation
- interview skills

## Examples of advanced research skills

- Training in new techniques
- Open science
- Data management
- Scientific writing
- Experimental design
- Qualitative & quantitative methods
- User design
- Gender dimension of research

❖ [Transferable skills](#)

❖ [The Entrepreneurship Competence Framework](#)



# Supervisor

- The best proposals are constructed where the Supervisor has an active role in their development.
- Appropriate level of supervision depends on the career stage of both parties, and the expectations of the project
  - There is no “correct” formula
- Can be built on an existing collaborative relationship;
- Justify this in the application
  - Why will this be beneficial? How will this change during the fellowship? How will the fellow gain independence/ maturity?
- For less experienced supervisors;
  - Justify their involvement – don’t leave it to the evaluators to read between the lines
    - They gain experience in EU funding; They have the opportunity to grow their group They are developing their own career
  - Highlight any mentorship/support for the supervisor
- Understand how the relationship will work day to day
- New [MSCA Guidelines on Supervision](#)

# Cross Cutting Issues

Dissemination, Communication and Exploitation, Open Science and Gender

# What do we mean by dissemination, communication and exploitation

## Dissemination

- Promotion and raising awareness of project results

## Exploitation

- is the use of results for commercial purposes or in public policymaking.

## Communication

- Making your research activities known to society

## Results

- Products (material, prototype, software, algorithms, ...)
- Services (training, advise)
- Knowledge (policy, data, methodology, ...)
- Performance, installation,

# Things to think about

- Have clear plan for communication, dissemination and exploitation
- **Can be linked to training & research objectives and activities**
- Describe the target audiences and key stakeholders
- Why does the target audience need to know about the action/results
- Detail the activities you will use (and why)
- One way vs two way communication
- Achievements, expectations, project activities, lessons learned,
- Activities occur throughout the entire project's lifetime – not just at the end
- **Evaluated under Impact**

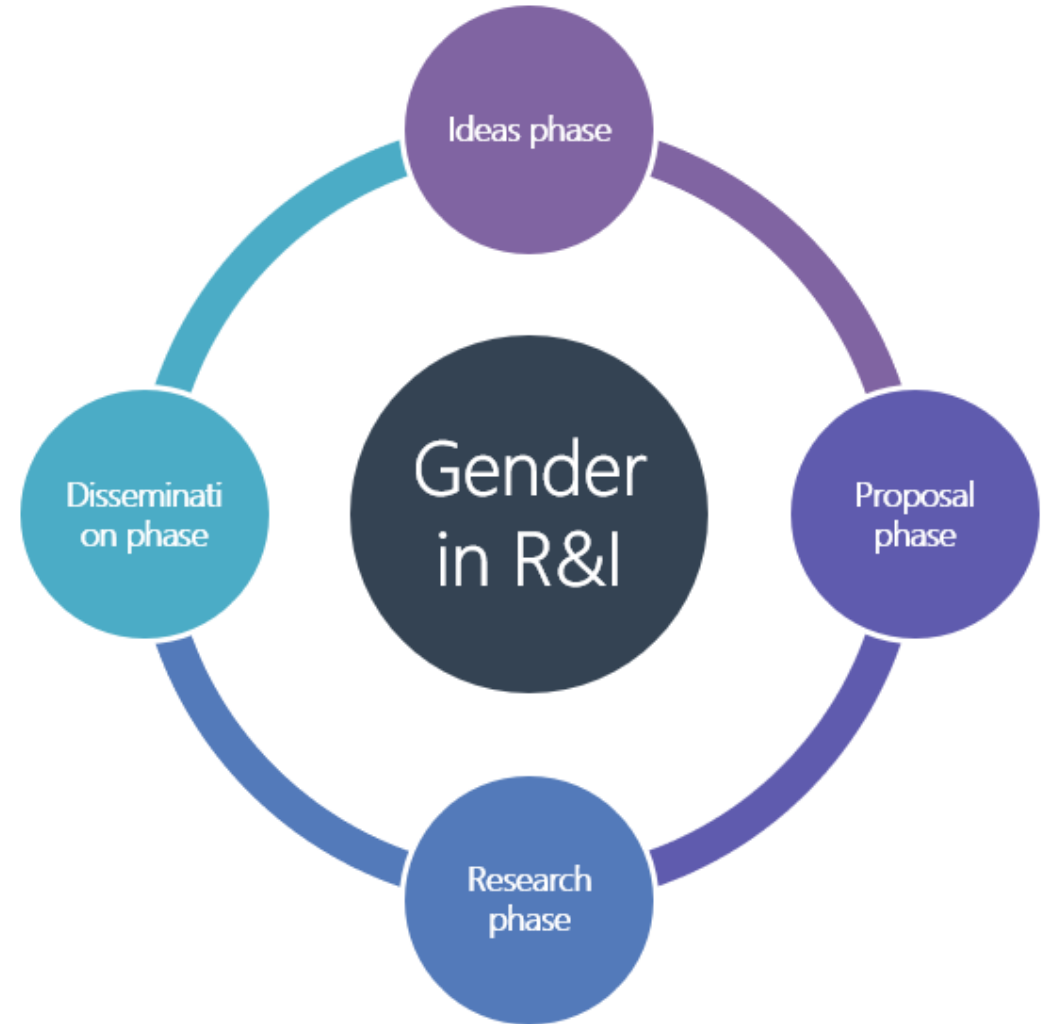
# Open Science

- Continuation of the open science policy developed under Horizon 2020
  - further advances, requiring research data to be FAIR and open by default.
- Encouraging uptake of Open Science practices through funding
  - including for activities to enhance researcher skills in Open Science and support reward systems
- Open access to scientific publications
  - Immediate open access via repository at the latest upon publication under open licence
- From open research data pilot to responsible research data management
  - All research data must be managed in line with FAIR principles, with data management plan as a standard deliverable
- Open access to research data via repository under principle ‘as open as possible, as closed as necessary’
- [Open Research Europe](#) – OA publishing platform for Horizon 2020 Horizon Europe funded research
  - ❖ Monitoring system to ensure compliance with Horizon Europe provisions
  - ❖ Evaluation Criteria under Excellence



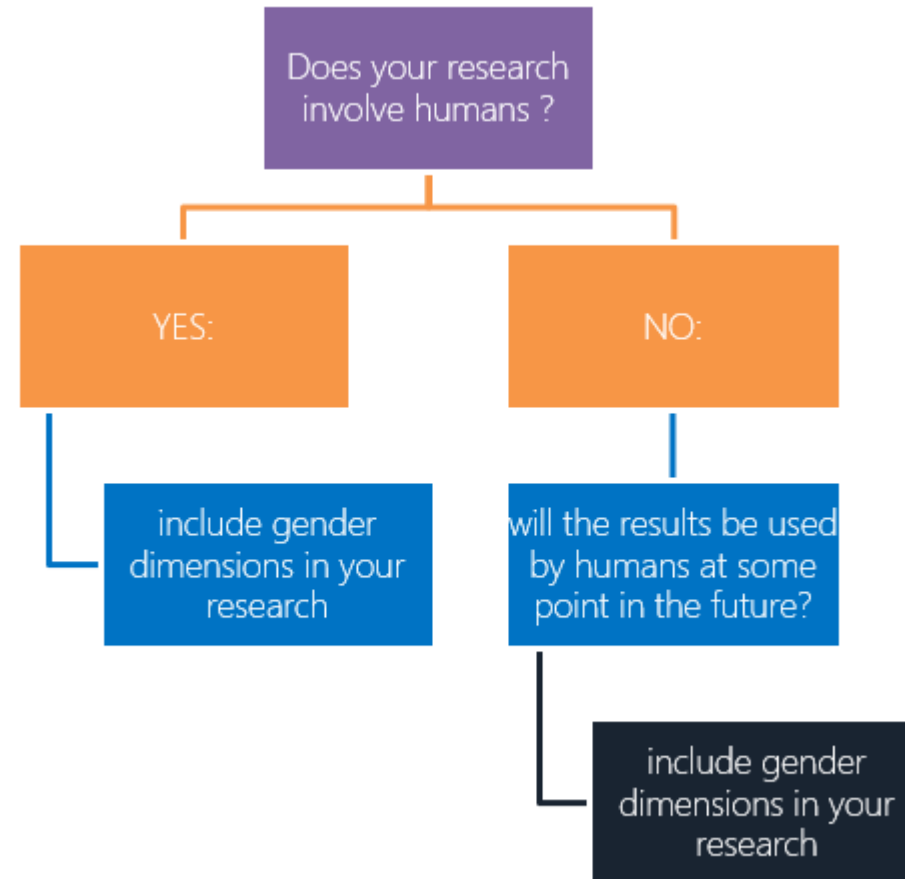
# Gender Dimension of Research

- Adds a valuable dimension to research and take it in a new direction
- Gender bias also leads to missed market opportunities
- Ensures excellence and quality in outcomes and enhancing sustainability.
- Adds value to society by making research more responsive to social needs



❖ Evaluation Criteria under Excellence

# How do you know if sex/gender is relevant to your project?



# Thing to Remember and Resources



# Proposal Advice

## Key points

This is the supervisor (PI) grant

Both the PI & the Fellow are involved in writing the proposal

Fellow should have a strong CV (in relation to their career stage)

Read all call documentation and the evaluation criteria

Consider any relevant EU policy documents

Make it easy for the evaluators to find the information

Evaluators will be experts, but not necessarily in your exact area

Use clear and concise language

Explain country/research area specific jargon

Include diagrams, images, tables if appropriate

Meet your planned supervisor/fellow (virtual or otherwise)

Research previous and current projects

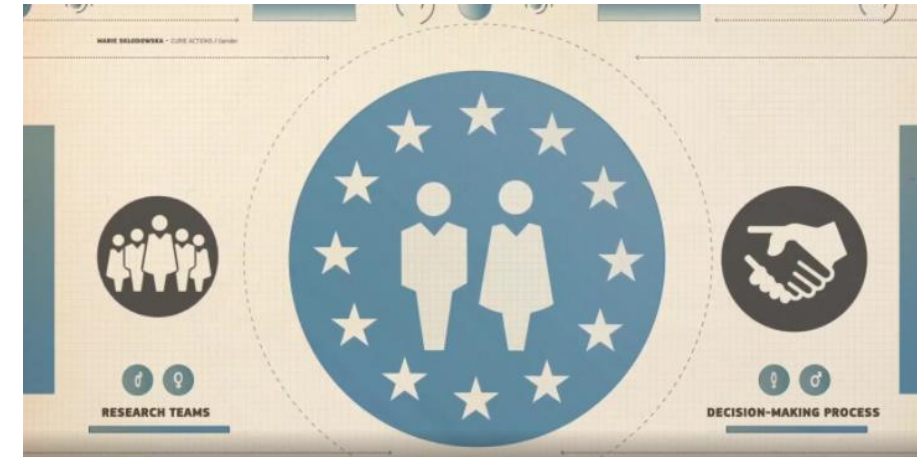
Find colleagues to proof read drafts with the evaluation criteria

Best proposals have input from Fellow, Supervisor and Host intuition

The proposal will take time to write

# Related Resources

- Promoting [Gender Equality in Research and Innovation](#)
- incorporating [gender in H2020 proposal](#)
- H2020 Online Manual – [Gender Equality](#)
- Case studies [Gender Innovations](#)
- Toolkit and Training – [How to make research gender sensitive](#)
- European Institute for Gender Equality- [Gender Equality in Academia and Research](#)
- [Gender Action](#) –Series of webinars on including gender in H2020 proposals
- H2020 Gender Advisory Group paper – [better integration of gender in work programme development](#)
- Understanding gender dimension for MSCA projects - [video](#)



# MSCA PF: Additional Information

- [MSCA Green Charter](#)
- [MSCA Guide for Supervisors](#)
- [MSCA Work Programme](#)
- [Guide for Applicants \(2021 Call\)](#)
- [MSCA Model Grant Agreement](#)
- [MSCA 2018-2020 Work Programme](#)
- [NET4Mobility+](#) Network of MSCA NCPs
- [Horizon Europe Programme Guide](#)
- [Marie Curie Alumni Association](#)
- [EURAXESS REFEX \(Career Development App\)](#)





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