

EN

Horizon Europe

Work Programme 2023-2025

2. Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions

(European Commission Decision C(2025) 2779 of 14 May 2025)

A Career Development Plan must be established jointly by the supervisor and each recruited doctoral candidate. In case of joint supervision, such a plan should be established involving all supervisors. In addition to research objectives, this plan comprises the researcher's training and career needs, including training on transferable skills, teaching, planning for publications and participation in conferences and events aiming at opening science and research to citizens. The plan, established at the beginning of the recruitment, should be revised (and updated where needed) within 18 months.

Call - MSCA Doctoral Networks 2025

HORIZON-MSCA-2025-DN-01

Conditions for the Call

Indicative budget(s)[24]

Topics	Type of Action	Budgets (EUR million)	Expected EU contribution per project (EUR million)	Indicative number of projects expected to be funded
		2025		
Opening: 28 May 2025 Deadline(s): 25 Nov 2025				
HORIZON-MSCA-2025-DN-01-01	TMA Doctoral Networks	597.80		Not relevant
HORIZON-MSCA-2025-DN-01-01	TMA Doctoral Networks - Industrial Doctorates			Not relevant
HORIZON-MSCA-2025-DN-01-01	TMA Doctoral Networks - Joint Doctorates			Not relevant
Overall indicative budget		597.80		

General conditions relating to this call	
Admissibility conditions	The conditions are described in General Annex A. See exceptions

[24] The Director-General responsible for the call may decide to open the call up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date(s) of opening.
The Director-General responsible may delay the deadline(s) by up to two months.
All deadlines are at 17.00.00 Brussels local time.
The budget amounts are subject to the availability of the appropriations provided for in the general budget of the Union for years 2023, 2024 and 2025.

	and specific conditions at the end of this work programme part.
Eligibility conditions	The general conditions are described in General Annex B. See exceptions and specific conditions at the end of this work programme part.
Financial and operational capacity and exclusion	The criteria are described in General Annex C.
Award criteria	For application of the general award criteria, including weighting and thresholds, see the specific conditions at the end of this Work Programme part.
Documents	The documents are described in General Annex E.
Procedure	The general procedure is described in General Annex F. See exceptions and specific conditions at the end of this work programme part.
Expected EU contribution per project	The expected EU contribution depends on the number of person-months requested. For the applicable unit contributions, see specific conditions for MSCA at the end of this Work Programme part.
Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements	The general conditions are described in General Annex G. See exceptions and specific conditions at the end of this Work Programme part.

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

HORIZON-MSCA-2025-DN-01-01: MSCA Doctoral Networks 2025

Expected Outcome: Project results are expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

For supported doctoral candidates

- New research and transferable skills and competences, leading to improved employability and career prospects within and outside academia;
- New knowledge allowing the conversion of ideas into products and services, where relevant;
- Enhanced networking and communication capacities with scientific peers, as well as with the general public that will increase and broaden the research and innovation impact.

For participating organisations

- Improved quality, relevance and sustainability of doctoral training programmes and supervision arrangements;
- Enhanced cooperation and transfer of knowledge between sectors and disciplines;
- Increased integration of training and research activities between participating organisations;
- Boosted R&I capacity;
- Increased internationalisation and attractiveness;
- Regular feedback of research results into teaching and education at participating organisations.

Scope: MSCA Doctoral Networks will implement doctoral programmes, by partnerships of universities, research institutions and research infrastructures, businesses including SMEs, and other socio-economic actors from different countries across Europe and beyond. MSCA Doctoral Networks are indeed open to the participation of organisations from third countries, in view of fostering strategic international partnerships for the training and exchange of researchers.

These doctoral programmes will respond to well-identified needs in various R&I areas, expose the researchers to the academic and non-academic sectors, and offer training in research-related, as well as transferable skills and competences relevant for innovation and long-term employability (e.g. entrepreneurship, commercialisation of results, Intellectual Property Rights, communication). Proposals for doctoral networks can reflect existing or planned research partnerships among the participating organisations.

The selection procedure for doctoral candidates must be open, transparent and merit-based, in line with the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. The vacancy notice (to be widely advertised internationally, including on the EURAXESS[25] website) must mention if the published rates include all employer and employee's taxes and contributions. If possible, the gross salary (net salary + employee's taxes and contributions) should be published.

MSCA Doctoral Networks are encouraged to lead to Industrial or Joint Doctorates.

Industrial Doctorates

Through Industrial Doctorates, doctoral candidates will step outside academia and develop skills in industry and business by being jointly supervised by academic and non-academic organisations, both of which can be established in the same EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country.

Joint Doctorates

[25] https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/

Joint Doctorates represent a highly integrated type of international, inter-sectoral and multi/interdisciplinary collaboration in doctoral training. They lead to the delivery of joint, double or multiple doctoral degrees[26] recognised in at least one EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country.

Supervisory Board

Each MSCA Doctoral Network should have a clearly identified supervisory board co-ordinating network-wide training, research and in particular supervision activities in line with the Guidelines for MSCA supervision, while establishing continuous communication and exchange of best practice among the participating organisations to maximise the benefits of the partnership.

Training activities

MSCA Doctoral Networks should exploit complementarities between participating organisations and foster sharing of knowledge and networking activities for example through the organisation of workshops and conferences. Proposed training activities should respond to well identified needs in various R&I areas, with appropriate references to inter- and multidisciplinary fields and follow the EU Principles for Innovative Doctoral Training[27]. They should be primarily focused on developing new scientific knowledge through original research on personalised projects.

Inter-sectoral secondments of researchers to other participating organisations, including in third countries, are encouraged when relevant, feasible and beneficial for the researchers and in line with the project objectives. This will increase the employability of the researchers outside academia.

Doctoral Networks should develop substantial training modules, including digital ones, addressing key transferable skills and competences common to all fields and fostering the culture of Open Science, innovation and entrepreneurship as well as good scientific conduct such as research integrity. In particular, Doctoral Networks should adequately prepare doctoral candidates for increased research collaboration and information-sharing made possible by new (digital) technologies (e.g. collaborative tools, opening access to publications and to other research outputs including data, FAIR data management, societal engagement and citizen science, etc.).

Supervision

Particular attention is paid to the quality of supervision and mentoring arrangements as well as career guidance. Joint supervision of the researchers is mandatory for Industrial and Joint Doctorates.

Career Development Plan

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[26] Every time this Work Programme part refers to doctoral degrees, this means that the degrees have to be recognised as such by the relevant authorities of the country or countries concerned.

[27] principles_for_innovative_doctoral_training.pdf

A Career Development Plan must be established jointly by the supervisor and each recruited doctoral candidate. In case of joint supervision, such a plan should be established involving all supervisors. In addition to research objectives, this plan comprises the researcher's training and career needs, including training on transferable skills, teaching, planning for publications and participation in conferences and events aiming at opening science and research to citizens. The plan, established at the beginning of the recruitment, should be revised (and updated where needed) within 18 months.

supervising, hosting, training or seconding researchers/research staff or managing and/or funding programmes.

'Implementing partners' means third parties implementing the MSCA COFUND Doctoral or Postdoctoral programmes by recruiting researchers. Implementing partners can receive financial support from the beneficiary. Implementing partners that are identified in the proposal must include a letter of commitment before the signature of the grant agreement to ensure their active participation in the action. The involvement of any implementing partner for which no such evidence of commitment is submitted will not be taken into account.

'Interdisciplinarity' means the integration of information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts or theories from two or more scientific disciplines. The term discipline refers to the first level of MSCA keywords[130].

1. MSCA DOCTORAL NETWORKS

1.1. Applicable unit contributions[131]

The EU contribution for MSCA Doctoral Networks will take the form of unit contributions, as stipulated in Decision of 11 March 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions and unit contributions for Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions under the Horizon Europe Programme[132].

The following budget categories apply:

MSCA Doctoral Networks	**Contributions for recruited researchers per person-month**					**Institutional unit contributions per person-month**	
	Living allowance	**Mobility allowance**	**Family allowance** (if applicable)	**Long-term leave allowance** (if applicable)	**Special needs allowance** (if applicable)	**Research, training and networking contribution**	**Management and indirect contribution**
	EUR 4010	EUR 710	EUR 660	EUR 4720 x % covered by the beneficiary	requested unit[133] x (1/number of months)	EUR 1600	EUR 1200

130 MSCA Keywords.pdf (europa.eu)

131 These conditions only apply to the 2024 and 2025 calls of this Work Programme. For the conditions applying to the 2023 calls, please see the Work Programme version adopted on 6 December 2022 (European Commission Decision C(2022)7550).

132 The indicative budget includes budget provisions for the increase of the maximum EU contribution for grants funded under Horizon Europe MSCA Doctoral Networks calls in line with the provisions of the decision authorising the use of lump sum contributions and unit contributions for Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions under the Horizon Europe Programme.

133 The pre-defined categories are as follows: 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.

A country correction coefficient applies to the living allowance in order to ensure equal treatment and purchasing power parity for all researchers. This coefficient is the one applicable to the country of the recruiting beneficiary (see Table 1 at the end of this Work Programme part). The living allowance is a gross amount, including compulsory deductions under national law, such as employer and employee social security contributions and direct taxes. The beneficiary must recruit each eligible doctoral candidate under an employment contract or equivalent direct contract, including an instrument of appointment (e.g., for permanent staff and/or officials), with full social security coverage (including sickness, parental, unemployment and invalidity benefits, pension rights, benefits in respect of accidents at work and occupational diseases). An exemption from this rule can be accepted only in cases where national legislation or the equivalent internal regulations of International European Research Organisations (IERO), entities created under Union law, or an international organisation, prohibit this possibility and subject to the prior agreement of the granting authority.

When an employment contract or instrument of appointment cannot be provided, the beneficiary may exceptionally recruit the doctoral candidate under a 'fixed-amount fellowship'. In this case, the living allowance will be halved, and the beneficiary must ensure that the doctoral candidate enjoys minimum social security coverage (including sickness, parental and invalidity benefits, and benefits for accidents at work and occupational diseases).

The beneficiary must pay to the doctoral candidates at least the amount of the **living allowance** (minus all compulsory deductions under national legislation). A top-up may be paid to the researchers in order to complement this contribution. In addition to the living allowance, all doctoral candidates must receive a **mobility allowance**. This allowance covers their additional, private mobility-related costs (e.g. travel and accommodation costs), not their professional costs under the action, which are covered by the research, training and networking contribution.

If the recruited doctoral candidate has or acquires family obligations during the action duration, i.e. persons linked to him/her by (i) marriage, or (ii) a relationship with equivalent status to a marriage recognised by the legislation of the country or region where this relationship was formalised; or (iii) dependent children who are actually being maintained by the researcher, the **family allowance** must be paid to him/her as well.

The **long-term leave allowance** contributes to the personnel costs incurred by the beneficiaries in case of the researchers' leave, including maternity, paternity, parental, sick or special leave, longer than 30 consecutive days. The **special needs allowance** contributes to the additional costs for the acquisition of special needs items and services for researchers with disabilities, whose long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments[134] are certified by a competent national authority, and of such nature that their participation in the action may not be possible without them (e.g. assistance by third persons, adaptation of work environment, additional travel/transportation costs). These special needs items or services

[134] See Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

must not have been funded from another source (e.g. social security or health insurance). Both long-term leave and special needs allowances should be requested when the need arises. The **research, training and networking contribution** should cover, for example, costs for training and networking activities that contribute directly to the researchers' career development (e.g. participation in conferences, trips related to work on the action, training, language courses, seminars, lab material, books, library records, publication costs), research expenses, visa-related fees and travel expenses, additional costs arising from each secondment of six months or less, which require mobility from the place of residence (e.g. travel and accommodation costs).

The **management and indirect contribution** should cover the beneficiary's additional costs in connection with the action (e.g. personnel costs for project management/coordination, indirect costs).

The above rates apply to doctoral candidates devoting themselves to their project on a full-time basis. Researchers may, in agreement with the supervisor and beneficiary and with prior approval by the granting authority, implement their project on a part-time basis. Such a request is limited to personal or family reasons. In cases of part-time work, the doctoral candidates must work at least 50% of the full working time in their recruiting organisation for the action funded by the MSCA[135]. The recruiting beneficiary should report costs as pro rata of the applicable full-time unit contributions.

1.2. Admissibility

The following exception to the General Annex A applies:

- The page limit of the application is 30 pages (excluding annexes).

1.3. Eligibility

Given the specific nature of MSCA Doctoral Networks, the following exceptions and additional eligibility criteria apply. This section also contains eligibility conditions, which apply during action implementation but cannot be verified at proposal stage.

- All proposals must indicate if they are resubmitted from the previous MSCA Doctoral Networks call under Horizon Europe.

- Proposals submitted to the previous call of MSCA Doctoral Networks under Horizon Europe and having received a score of less than 80% must not be resubmitted the following year.

- Any proposal involving 70% or more of the same recruiting organisations as in another proposal submitted to the previous call of the MSCA Doctoral Networks under Horizon Europe that has received a score of less than 80% will be assessed for whether it is a resubmission, irrespectively of the applicants' self-declaration. The assessment will be carried out by external expert evaluators based on the similarity of

[135] An exception to this limit may be granted for medical reasons.

objectives as well as on the similarity of the scientific approach proposed to reach such objectives.

1.3.1. Participating organisations

- Applications must be submitted by a consortium including at least three independent legal entities, each established in a different EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country and with at least one of them established in an EU Member State. Should none of them be entitled to award a doctoral degree, a university or a consortium/grouping of academic/research institutions entitled to award a doctoral degree must be added to the project as an associated partner or an associated partner linked to a beneficiary.

- Not more than 40.0% of the EU contribution may be allocated to beneficiaries in the same country or to a single International European Research Organisation (IERO) or international organisation.

- International organisations with headquarters in an EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country will be deemed to be established in this Member State or Associated Country.

- Affiliated entities are not allowed to participate as they cannot claim costs in MSCA Doctoral Networks.

- All beneficiaries must recruit at least one doctoral candidate. They are required to host at their premises and supervise recruited researchers, or use associated partners linked to them to do so[136].

- In order to reach the objectives of Joint Doctorates, at least three independent legal entities must be entitled to award doctoral degrees. At least one[137] of the institutions conferring a joint, double or multiple doctoral degree must be established in an EU Member State and/or Horizon Europe Associated Country. An applicant from the academic sector, which has transferred the right of awarding a doctoral degree to a consortium/grouping of academic/research institutions to which it belongs to, is also eligible. Applicants must provide, at the time of the submission of the proposal, a pre-agreement to award a joint, double or multiple degree to the doctoral candidate(s). The proposal should indicate from which institutions a researcher is expected to receive the degree(s).

- Joint Doctorates must set up a joint governance structure with joint admission, selection, supervision, monitoring and assessment procedures.

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136 In exceptional cases, where a beneficiary is established in a country different from the place where the recruited researcher is hosted, the country correction coefficient of the hosting entity is taken into account during the grant agreement preparation process, in order to ensure the correct budget calculation.

137 These conditions only apply to the 2024 and 2025 calls of this Work Programme. For the conditions applying to the 2023 call, please see the Work Programme version adopted on 6 December 2022 (European Commission Decision C(2022)7550).

1.3.2. Recruited researchers

- Supported researchers must be **doctoral candidates**, i.e. not already in possession[138] of a doctoral degree at the date of the recruitment.

- Researchers must be enrolled in a doctoral programme leading to the award of a doctoral degree in at least one EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country.

- Recruited researchers can be of any nationality and must comply with the following **mobility rule**: they must not have resided or carried out their main activity[139] (work, studies, etc.) in the country of the recruiting beneficiary for more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately before their recruitment date.

  For 'International European Research Organisations' (IERO), 'international organisations', or entities created under Union law, the researchers must not have spent more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately before their recruitment in the same appointing organisation.

  Compulsory national service, short stays such as holidays and time spent by the researcher as part of a procedure for obtaining refugee status under the Geneva Convention[140] are not taken into account.

- Secondments are eligible for up to one third of the actual months spent implementing the research training activities under the action. This limitation does not apply in the case of Industrial Doctorates and Joint Doctorates.

- In case of industrial doctorates, doctoral candidates must spend at least 50% of their fellowship duration in the non-academic sector.

1.3.3. Duration of the action

- The duration of the action must not exceed 48 months from the starting date set out in the grant agreement (including the time needed to recruit and select the doctoral candidates), except in the case of joint doctorates where this maximum duration is 60 months.

- The duration of each fellowship (on the basis of full-time employment) is minimum 3 and maximum 36 months, except in the case of joint doctorates, where this maximum duration is 48 months.

- The overall EU contribution for MSCA Doctoral Networks actions is limited to a maximum of 540 person-months.

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138 Researchers who have successfully defended their doctoral thesis but who have not yet formally been awarded the doctoral degree will not be considered eligible.

139 Country of the main activity: the country where the researcher is physically based when carrying out the main activity and the country of the institution for which the main activity is performed (e.g., employer)

140 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol.

1.4. Award criteria

- Proposals will be evaluated by experts on the basis of the **award criteria** 'excellence', 'impact' and 'quality and efficiency of the implementation'.

- Evaluation scores will be awarded for each of these criteria, and not for the different aspects listed in the table below. Each criterion will be scored out of 5. Scores will be awarded with a resolution of one decimal place and will be subject to a weighting factor as indicated in the table below.

- Proposals scoring equal to or above 70% will be considered for funding — within the limits of the available call budget. Other proposals will be rejected.

Excellence	**Impact**	**Quality and efficiency of the implementation**
Quality and pertinence of the project's research and innovation objectives (and the extent to which they are ambitious, and go beyond the state of the art)	Contribution to structuring doctoral training at the European level and to strengthening European innovation capacity, including the potential for: a) meaningful contribution of the non-academic sector to the doctoral training, as appropriate to the implementation mode and research field b) developing sustainable elements of doctoral programmes	Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages
Soundness of the proposed methodology (including interdisciplinary approaches, consideration of the gender dimension and other diversity aspects if relevant for the research project, and the quality of open science practices)	Credibility of the measures to enhance the career perspectives and employability of researchers and contribution to their skills development	Quality, capacity and role of each participant, including hosting arrangements and extent to which the consortium as a whole brings together the necessary expertise

Excellence	Impact	Quality and efficiency of the implementation
Quality and credibility of the training programme (including transferable skills,inter/multidisciplinary inter-sectoral and gender as well as other diversity aspects)	Suitability and quality of the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities	
Quality of the supervision (including mandatory joint supervision for industrial and joint doctorate projects)	The magnitude and importance of the project's contribution to the expected scientific, societal and economic impacts	
50%	**30%**	**20%**
Weighting		

1.5. Procedure

- Proposals must be submitted to only one of eight 'main evaluation panels': Chemistry (CHE), Social Sciences and Humanities (SOC), Economic Sciences (ECO), Information Science and Engineering (ENG), Environment and Geosciences (ENV), Life Sciences (LIF), Mathematics (MAT), Physics (PHY). Industrial and joint doctorates will be ranked in the scientific panel of submission. Each panel will establish a ranked list.

- The distribution of the indicative budget of the call will be proportional to the number of eligible proposals received in each panel. If the budget allocated to any panel exceeds the requirements of all proposals positively evaluated[141] in that panel, the excess budget will be reallocated to the other panels based on the distribution described above. Equally, if the allocated funding to a panel is insufficient to fund the highest ranked proposal in that panel, the necessary budget will be transferred from the other panels based on the distribution described above, in order to ensure that the highest ranked proposal can be funded. In order to ensure budget optimisation and an equitable success rate across panels, the excess budget remaining after the initial allocation of funding to the proposals in the panels may be transferred between panels.

Ex-aequo Proposals

- When the total scores of two or more proposals are equal (ex-aequo cases), the priority order will be established as follows:

[141] Measured as proposals having passed all relevant evaluation thresholds.