

# MSCA COFUND Post-Award Factsheet

## Introduction

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) aim to promote scientific excellence and attract highly skilled researchers and innovators to Europe. Specifically, the various MSCA funding opportunities set out to support researcher training, career development, and knowledge exchange, thereby helping researchers to establish a stable career path within Europe.

This factsheet sets out to support beneficiaries and others in the implementation of their MSCA COFUND project. For an overview of the other MSC Actions, see the dedicated [UKRO MSCA factsheets](#).

## Grant agreement preparation

As is the case for all Horizon Europe proposals, the ‘eight months to grant from the call deadline’ principle applies. Therefore, for the most part, applicants will receive their results within five months of the call deadline and successful proposals will usually be asked to sign their grant agreement within the remaining three months. Each project will be allocated a Project Officer from the Research Executive Agency (REA), who will be responsible for its management on behalf of the EU. Project Officers provide instructions as to the steps required to complete grant preparation and are the first point of contact for any questions concerning the process. Awardees are encouraged to discuss any concerns, changes and questions with their Project Officers throughout the lifetime of the grant.

## Funding – Unit Costs

The MSCA funds projects using fixed ‘unit cost contributions’ for the researcher and the institution. These ‘unit costs’ are flat-rate EU contributions to support the researcher, research costs and institutional costs during the project and the total EC contribution is determined by multiplying the relevant ‘unit costs’ by the number of person-months implemented. For COFUND projects, the funding provided by the EC is only a contribution to the total running costs of the project as a whole and the individual funding provided to the recruited researchers.

Contributions for researchers and institutions (Contributions per person-month)			
	COFUND Allowance	Long-term Leave Allowance	Special Needs Allowance
Doctoral Programme	EUR 3300	EUR 3300 x % covered by the beneficiary	Requested unit <sup>1</sup> x (1/number of months)
Postdoctoral Programme	EUR 4700	EUR 4700 x % covered by the beneficiary	Requested unit x (1/number of months)

<sup>1</sup> The pre-defined categories are 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

- **COFUND Allowance** is the EU contribution equivalent to the gross salary costs of the researcher and is subject to compulsory deductions under national law, such as employer and employee social security contributions, and direct taxes. It can also be used towards mobility costs, family costs (if applicable), training, research expenses, transfer of knowledge and networking activity costs, as well as management and indirect (overheads) costs.
- **Long-term Leave Allowance** contributes to the beneficiary's pay obligations related to researchers' leave that is longer than 30 consecutive days and not due to annual leave, maternity, paternity, parental, sick or special leave. It can be requested as and when the need arises. The allowance is a gross amount and will be subject to statutory deductions. During the leave of absence, no other allowances will be available.
- **Special Needs Allowance** replaces the Special Needs Lump Sum grant in Horizon 2020. This allowance contributes to the additional costs of researchers with disabilities, whose long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments are certified by a competent national authority and of such nature that their participation in the MSC Action may not be possible without the acquisition of special needs items or services. These special needs items or services shall not have been funded from another source (e.g., social security or health insurance). The allowance can be claimed anytime during project implementation.

Any other funding provided by the individual COFUND project to the recruited researcher will be stipulated in Annex 1 of the project's grant agreement. The additional funding must be spent as stipulated in Annex 1.

## Eligibility Criteria for Recruited Researchers

Applicants to COFUND projects must meet specific eligibility conditions related to their individual career stage/status and their international mobility. The mobility requirements for both Doctoral and Postdoctoral programmes are the same.



## Funding & Tenders Portal - 'My Projects'

As with all Horizon Europe projects, management and implementation will be carried out from start to finish through the [Funding & Tenders Portal](#). All ongoing projects can be accessed by individuals through their 'EU Login' (previously European Commission Authentication Service - ECAS) profile under 'My Projects' > 'My Area' which becomes visible after logging in. Comprehensive guidance concerning the management of projects through the Funding & Tenders Portal is available in the [Online Manual](#) and its 'How to' Wiki section (users must be logged in to access it).

## Payments and Reporting

**Pre-financing** of MSCA projects is limited and can be up to a maximum of 75% of the total EU contribution, 5% of which will be retained for the Mutual Insurance Mechanism (former Guarantee Fund). Pre-financing will normally be transferred to the coordinator within 30 days from entry into force of the grant agreement, or 10 days before the start date of the project. The coordinator can only transfer funds to beneficiaries that have already acceded to the grant agreement and only when the minimum number of beneficiaries has been met.

**Reporting** is broken down into Continuous Reporting and Periodic Reporting, both of which are accessed through the My Projects' grant management system within the Funding & Tenders Portal. It is the beneficiary's responsibility to complete all reports, including those related to any associated partners taking part in the action.

**Continuous reporting** is available throughout the lifetime of the project. Information concerning the project is added throughout the action and will be consolidated at the reporting stage to help alleviate the administrative burden of bringing reports together. This mode of reporting is particularly important for the [Mobility Declarations](#)<sup>2</sup> which need to be uploaded within 20 days of the recruitment of each researcher.

The **Periodic reporting** schedule will be detailed under Article 21 of the grant agreement. In general, reporting periods last 18 months. At months 12 and 36, the beneficiaries will also need to submit a **Progress Report** providing a comprehensive overview of the progress made in the previous calendar year.

**Financial reporting** declaring the number of person-months, along with a **Technical Report** giving an overview of progress so far, are required to be submitted at the end of a reporting period. These two reports will need to be submitted together as one report within 60 days of the end of each reporting period. The REA will process the reports as soon as possible and, assuming the reports are accepted, the corresponding payments will be transferred (up to 90% of the total EU contribution).

The **Mid-Term Meeting** provides an opportunity for the beneficiaries, associated partners, entities with a capital/legal link, as well as the recruited researcher to meet with the Agency to discuss any project implementation issues and identify feasible solutions. The meeting is designed to assess the general progress of the project compared to the original planning and objectives. It is also a time for the project officer to meet researchers seconded on the project. The meeting is generally organised within the first reporting period, ideally, between months 14 and 18 and before the end of the first reporting period, in accordance with Article 25.

**Final reporting** takes place at the end of the project. The Final Report is also made up of the technical and financial updates and should be submitted within 60 days of the project end date. Once the Final Report has been accepted, the remaining 10% of the project costs will be released along with the amount retained for the Mutual Insurance Mechanism.

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<sup>2</sup> Referred to as the 'Researcher Declaration' under Horizon 2020.

## Recruitment, Employment and Visa Considerations

Regardless of the type of the COFUND project, the researchers must be directly recruited by the beneficiary or the implementing partner, on an employment contract (or other direct contract with equivalent benefits, including social security coverage). The employment contract must comply with Annex 5 of the grant agreement, which specifies recruitment and working conditions for researchers, as well as the obligations towards researchers.

Researchers are expected to work full-time on the projects, however part-time working for personal reasons is possible. For those recruited to a Postdoctoral Programme, there is also the option of part-time working for professional reasons. Regardless of the cause for part-time work, this will need to be discussed and agreed upon with REA in advance.

The recruited researchers may need to obtain a UK entry visa. Information on UK visa entry requirements can be found in a [dedicated UKRO factsheet](#).

Beneficiaries and implementing partners must advertise and publish vacancies for the recruitment of doctoral candidates internationally and, as a minimum, they should be posted on the [EURAXESS Jobs](#) portal.

## Record Keeping and Audits

Audits for MSCA projects are different from other Horizon Europe actions. When monitoring and/or auditing MSCA projects, the main concern is whether the COFUND Allowance and any other researcher allowances stipulated in the grant agreement were implemented correctly. In practice, this means auditors do not look at actual costs. Instead, evidence is sought that clearly demonstrates the eligibility of the researcher/staff member against the scheme conditions, as well as the correct mode of engagement (i.e., that the researcher was employed as a full member of staff with associated benefits, and that this was the case for the period of time claimed for). Auditors will also check that the number of months declared correspond to the actual number of months spent by the researchers on the research training and innovation activities.

Different type of evidence to prove the correct implementation of the Researcher unit costs, correct employment conditions and working time can be retained, including but not limited to:

- researcher/staff member's CV
- copies of diplomas
- lab books
- scientific articles
- library records
- travel documentation
- employment contracts
- time sheets

How long these types of records should be retained following the end date of the project will be indicated under Article 20 of the grant agreement and is normally five years.

## Consortium and Partnership Agreements

COFUND projects are mono-beneficiary projects and as such do not need a consortium agreement. However, if the project involves implementing partners and or associated partners, a consortium agreement or partnership agreement is highly recommended.

Any agreements should set out:

- the internal organisation of the consortium
- management of access to the electronic exchange system
- distribution of EU funding
- additional rules on rights and obligations related to background and results
- settlement of disputes
- liability, indemnification and confidentiality arrangements between the partners
- conflict resolution processes

UKRO, the European Commission and the REA do not advocate the use of any standard agreement templates. However, below are some examples that organisations may wish to use and adapt to their own needs:

- [DESCA Horizon Europe Model Consortium Agreement](#);
- [LERU template for European Training Networks \(ITN\)](#).

## More information

- [Horizon Europe Website](#)
- [MSCA website](#)
- [MSCA 2023-2025 Work Programme](#)
- [Funding & Tenders Portal \(Calls for proposals\)](#)
- [MSCA Green Charter](#)
- [MSCA Guidelines on Supervision](#)
- [UK MSCA National Contact Point events](#)
- [UKRO MSCA factsheets](#)
- [The European Charter & Code for Researchers](#)
- [MSCA Radiance](#)

Horizon Europe's legal basis:

- [Regulation establishing Horizon Europe](#)
- [Decision establishing the Specific Programme of Horizon Europe](#)
- [First Strategic Plan for Horizon Europe \(2021-2024\)](#)
- [Second Strategic Plan for Horizon Europe \(2025-2027\)](#)

UKRO Portal

- [UKRO Portal](#)