



UK Research
and Innovation

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA)

COFUND 2026

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5 February 2026



Agenda

1 Welcome and Introduction

- Raquel Meco Melguizo, UK MSCA NCP

2 MSCA COFUND

- Jozsef MIKITA, European Research Executive Agency (REA)

3 MSCA COFUND Project:

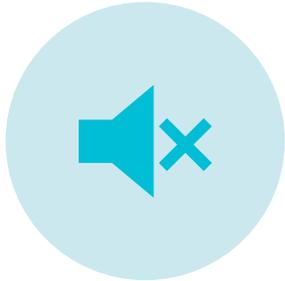
- Dr Jesper Christensen, Coventry University

4 Questions and Answers

- All presenters



Housekeeping



All participants will be muted for the duration of the webinar.



A chat function is available and will be monitored.



The session is **recorded**



Please use the **Q&A function** to submit questions. Up voting is available

UKRI Horizon Europe

We support UK based organisations involved in EU R&I

Our Mission: Maximise UK participation in Horizon Europe

UKRO Portal

- Dedicated **news articles, events and factsheets** to support participation
- Alerts to **upcoming opportunities and call updates**

UK National Contact Point for

- European Research Council
- Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions programmes
- Widening Participation
- COST

We are part of UKRI's International team



Horizon Europe: UK Participation

- The **UK's association** to Horizon Europe and Copernicus took effect on **1 January 2024**.
- This means **UK entities can participate in/coordinate projects and receive funding from Horizon Europe**, with the exception of the EIC Accelerator Investment Fund.
- The [UKRO website](#) provides information on upcoming European funding opportunities



What Does this Mean for Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions?

In MSCA COFUND Call, UK based organisations can:

- Participate as beneficiaries
- Coordinate projects
- Recruit doctoral candidates and postdoctoral fellows
- Can award PhDs
- Host secondments



UK joins Horizon
Europe, inc. MSCA

Introduction to MSCA



MSCA in Horizon Europe

The EU's reference programme for doctoral education and postdoctoral training

Equipping researchers with new knowledge and skills through mobility and training

Budget = €6.6billion



Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions

MSCA sets out to:

- support researcher training and career development
- create impact on researchers, institutions and systems
- contribute to EU priorities
 - European Green Deal objectives
 - The Climate Action target of Horizon Europe
 - The European Research Area (ERA)
 - The European Education Area (EEA)



It does this through

- Encouraging people to **become researchers and innovators**
- Equipping researchers with necessary **skills and international experience**
- Supporting **long term employability**
- Developing **attractive career opportunities**
- Fostering innovation and develop entrepreneurial mindset
- Promote the **EU's global attractiveness for talents**

Enhance skills of people behind research and innovation

Contribute to excellent research - Bottom-up approach

Mobility (International, intersectoral and interdisciplinary)

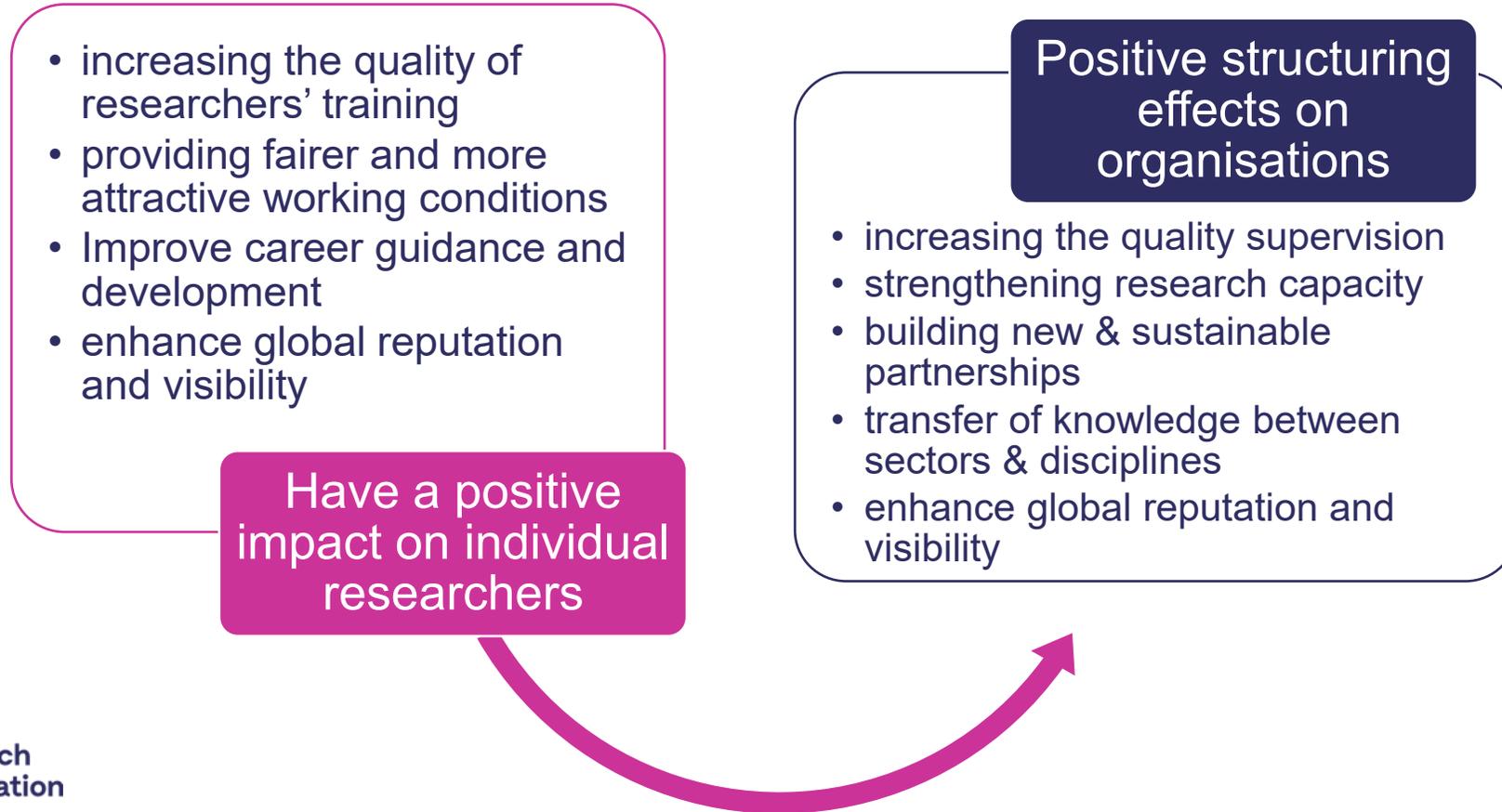
Attractive Working and employment conditions

Structuring effect on organisations

Strong collaboration with industry, SME and other non-academic sector actors

MSCA Structuring Effect

Contributing to the development of excellent doctoral programmes and postdoctoral training programmes



MSCA Actions

Doctoral Networks (DN)

Doctoral programmes in and outside academia, inc. joint & industrial doctorates

Total budget 2026: €593.03 million

Opening call: 28/05/2026

Deadline: 24/11/2026

Postdoctoral Fellowships (PF)

Support to excellent postdoctoral researchers

Total budget 2026: €399.05 million

Opening call: 09/04/2026

Deadline: 09/09/2026

Staff Exchanges (SE)

Support for research and innovation staff exchanges

Total budget 2026: €97.92 million

Opening call: 16/12/2025

Deadline: 16/04/2026

COFUND

Co-funding doctoral and postdoctoral programmes

Total budget 2026: €105.46 million

Opening call: 16/12/2025

Deadline: 08/04/2026

MSCA and Citizens

Public outreach events aiming to bring research and researchers closer to the public

There will not be a call in 2026

Choose Europe for Science (CEfS)

Co-funding postdoctoral programmes

There will not be a call in 2026



Resources/ Upcoming MSCA sessions

Resources

- [EU Funding & Tenders Portal](#)
- [MSCA 2026-2027 Work Programme](#)
- [MSCA Financial Guide](#)
- [MSCA Guidelines on Supervision](#)
- Our [MSCA Factsheets](#)
- [RADIANCE](#) project

Upcoming MSCA sessions

- [MSCA COFUND 2026 Call Information webinar](#), **5 February**, **10:00-12:00**
- [MSCA Staff Exchanges 2026 Call Information webinar](#), **24 February**, **10:00-12:00**
- MSCA Doctoral Networks, **25 June**, **10:00-12:00**. Registration details will follow soon



**UK Research
and Innovation**

Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less.

Marie Skłodowska-Curie

Thank you

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**UK Research
and Innovation**



Jozsef MIKITA

Research Programme Manager,
European Research Executive
Agency (REA)



Jozsef MIKITA

Research Programme Manager, European Research Executive
Agency (REA)

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions

Focus on MSCA COFUND

REA.A4 – Jozsef MIKITA

What is MSCA COFUND?

Mono-beneficiary action:

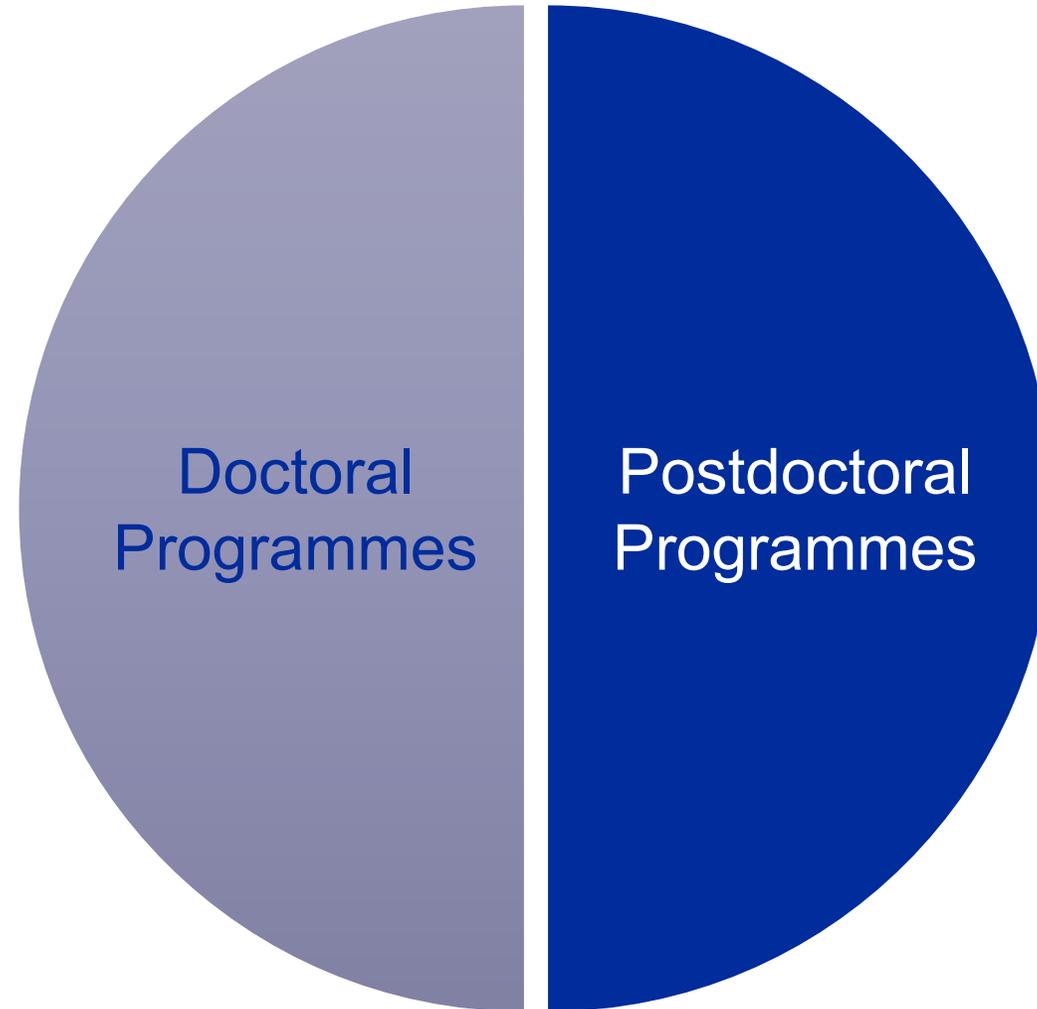
- new or existing national, regional, institutional schemes for doctoral training & postdoctoral fellowships

Focus:

- best practice, high standards & excellent working conditions, sustainable structuring effects



COFUND Modalities



MSCA COFUND – For whom?



Single legal entity established in an EU Member State



Single legal entity established in HE associated country



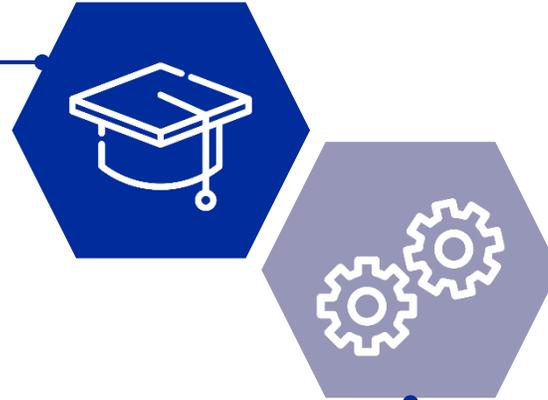
COFUND Academic & non-academic sectors

Academic sector

Higher education establishments

Non-profits

International European Research Organisations

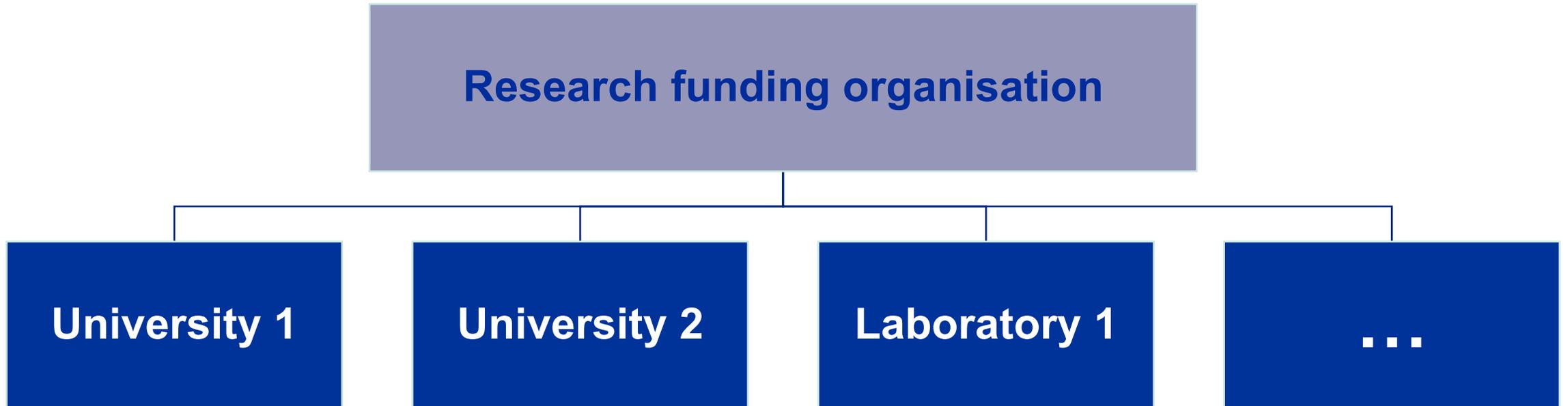


Non-academic sector

Any socio-economic actor not included in academic sector

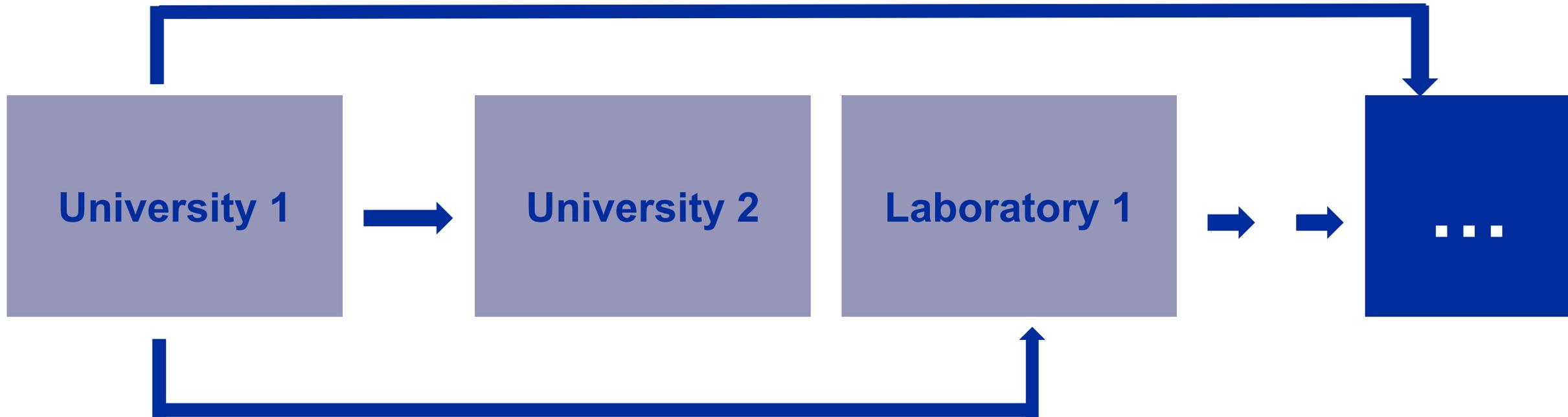
COFUND – Possible structures

1 - Hierarchical



COFUND – Possible structures

1 - Horizontal



COFUND – Possible structures

3 – Single Point



COFUND partners

**Implementing partners –
*EU MS, AC, LMI countries***

**Associated partners –
*any country***



COFUND Fundamentals

Co-funding

- Max. EUR 10m/beneficiary/call

Duration

- Programme: max. 60 months
Fellowship: min. 3 months

Recruitment

- Fellows: min. 3 fellows must be recruited



COFUND – Award criteria

Excellence (50%)

Impact (30%)

Implementation (20%)



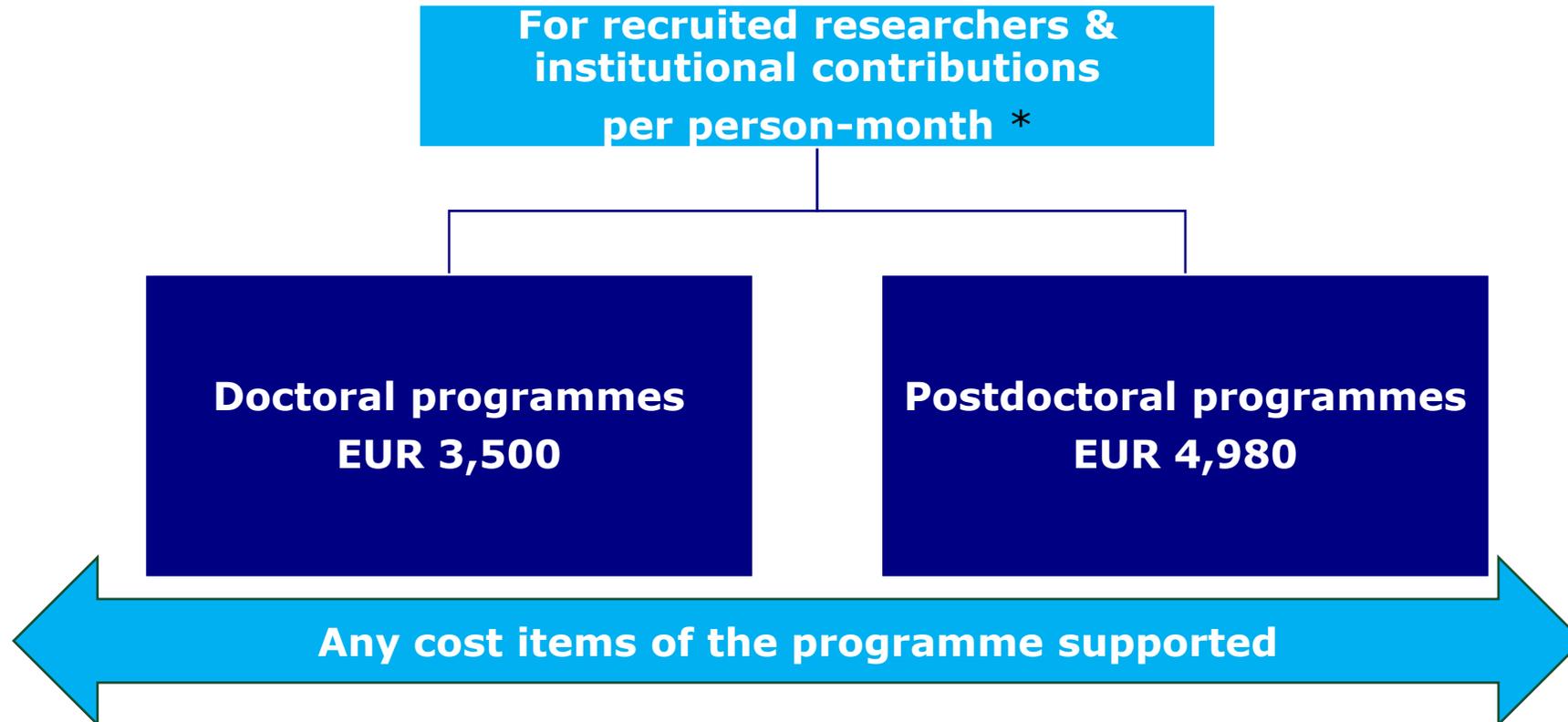
Overview of changes in WP 2026-2027

Change	Justification
Introduce minimum score threshold of 3 on all criteria	Ensure a minimum quality level on each criterion and align with corporate rules in Horizon Europe
Increase the max duration of secondments from 1/3 to half of fellowship duration	Provide more flexibility for secondments
Review and increase 2026-2027 allowances	Adapt allowances according to based on figures provided by Eurostat
Add criterion under excellence focusing on research and innovation objectives (CR 1.1). The assessment of this sub-criterion remains a compliance-check – no qualitative assessment of S&T	Ensure a clear research component is evident in the proposal to align with the MSCA's focus on excellence in research and training
Remove exception to the mobility rule	Avoid vague rules that cause issues in interpretation during evaluation and implementation
Remove exception to providing a dissemination and exploitation plan for projects with implementing partners	Safeguard fair evaluation procedures for all projects and ensure project impact



COFUND - Budget

Award criterion 'Excellence' 1.2: '...and **quality and attractiveness of the appointment conditions, including competitiveness of the salary** for the standards of the hosting country'



* For more details: [unit-mga_he_en.pdf](#)



COFUND Budget - Conditions

Total amount of programme to be specified

- **Amount for researchers**
- **Amount for organisation(s)**

Minimum monthly gross remuneration + mobility costs

- **Doctoral candidates: EUR 3,500***
- **Postdoctoral candidates: EUR 4,980***

*Min. EUR 1,750 (doctoral) & EUR 2,490 (postdoc) if fixed-amount fellowship



COFUND Budget – Part A

Participant number	Organisation short name	Role	Country	Academic sector	IO	No of recruited researchers	Number of person months (Employment)	Number of person months (Fellowship)	Contributions for recruited researchers		Total	Own resources	Financial contributions	Total estimated project income
									Employment Contract	Fixed amount fellowship				
1				No	No									
Total														

Part A of the proposal lists the Beneficiary and (if applicable) the Associated Partners (APs) involved in the proposal. Implementing Partners (IPs) are not presented in Part A. The beneficiary is 'Participant number 1' followed by the APs;

The beneficiary must encode under the column 'Own resources' its own financial input to the programme, and under the column 'Financial contribution' the financial support coming from IPs (if applicable).

The beneficiary must indicate for the APs – each in its relevant row - under the column 'Financial contribution' any financial support they intend to provide for the proposal;

The values (per category and overall) introduced in **Part A** must match exactly what is presented in **Part B**.



COFUND Budget – Part B

Cost categories	COFUND allowance = EU contribution (A) (EUR/person-month)	Own resources = provided by the Beneficiary (B) (EUR/person-month)	Financial contribution = provided by the Implementing/Associated Partners - if applicable (C) (EUR/person-month)	Total cost = COFUND allowance + Own resources + Financial contribution (A+B+C) (EUR/person-month)
Remuneration*				**
Mobility allowance***				**
Family allowance***				
Travel allowance***				
Research costs***				
Other (training, etc.) ***				
Management costs ***				
Indirect costs***				
Total amount of COFUND allowance = the sum of the above categories	3 500 (for Doctoral) 4 980 (for Postdoctoral)**			
Number of fellows				
Number of recruitment month/fellow				
TOTAL	EUR 3 500 / 4 980 x number of fellows x number of recruitment month/fellow			

*The monthly gross remuneration, i.e. salaries, social security contributions, taxes and other costs or compulsory deductions under national legislation linked to in the remuneration;

**The monthly gross remuneration and the mobility costs must be: not lower than EUR 3500 for Doctoral fellows and not lower than EUR 4980 for Postdoctoral fellows (50% of these amounts in case of fixed-amount fellowships);

***If applicable, delete otherwise. Other lines can be included for categories not shown in the template above;

****Choose the applicable rate according to the type of programme and delete the other. In case of fixed-amount fellowships the rates will be 50%.



I. COFUND RED FLAGS - selection committees

Award criterion 'Excellence' 1.2

- *'Quality and novelty of the selection/recruitment process for the researchers (transparency, **composition and organisation of selection committees**, ..).. evaluation criteria, equal opportunities, the gender dimension and other diversity aspects)..'*

Doctoral programmes

- Independent evaluators from outside the partnership; no COI; at all stages of the process

Post-doctoral programmes

- Independent evaluators based in other countries; no COI; at all stages of the process



II. COFUND **RED FLAGS** – supervision arrangements

Award criterion ‘Excellence’ 1.5

- ‘*Quality, novelty and pertinence of the **supervision**, career guidance and career development arrangements*’
- Applicants may contact a supervisor but no pre-selection;
- In case of contact: clear rationale + explanation to be added in the COFUND proposal;
- Supervisor cannot be involved in the drafting of the application;
- No pre-approval from the supervisor in the submission process.

NO ROLE for supervisors in the selection/recruitment process



III. COFUND **RED FLAGS** – underpayment of fellows

The monthly **gross remuneration**, i.e. salaries, social security contributions, taxes and other costs or compulsory deductions under national legislation linked to in the remuneration, **and the mobility costs** for the benefit of the researchers must be:

For researchers recruited under an employment contract:

- not lower than EUR 3500 (for doctoral candidates) and EUR 4980 (for postdoctoral researchers);

For researchers recruited under a fixed-amount fellowship:

- not lower than EUR 1750 (for doctoral candidates) and EUR 2490 (for postdoctoral researchers).



IV. COFUND **RED FLAGS**

Use of generative AI

The effective evaluation/assessment/selection of proposals (by the co-funded programmes)

CANNOT BE DELEGATED TO AI TOOLS

Programmes must set up evaluation/ selection committees

composed of **INDEPENDENT EXPERTS** to perform this task.



Deadlines and budget

Call	Opening / Closing	Budget
COFUND-2026	16 December 2025 / 8 April 2026	€105.46m



UK participation in HE MSCA COFUND

	Applications		Selected proposals	
	DP	PP	DP	PP
2024	2	0	0	0
2025	8	0	2*	0
Overall	10	0	2	0

*invited for GAP



Thank you



https://rea.ec.europa.eu/funding-and-grants/horizon-europe-marie-sklodowska-curie-actions_en

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Jesper Christensen

Associate Professor, Coventry
University



Starting out

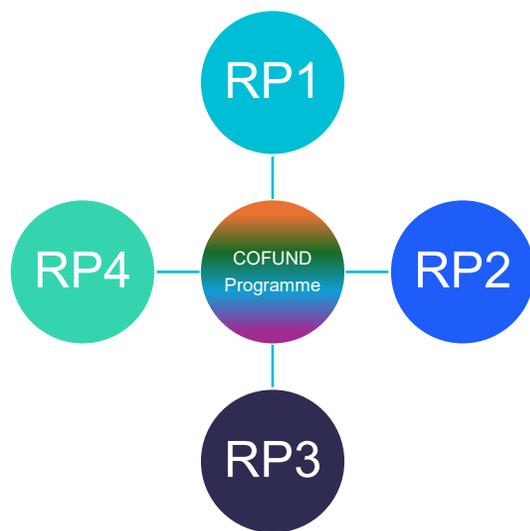
- My experience is based on Doctoral proposals
- Change your way of thinking and writing: “technical” → “people”
- Carefully strike a balance demonstrating a unique, highly attractive and supportive programme which is not restrictive or indistinct /incomplete
- You do not know the fellows or their skillsets!
- Create a clear identity and purpose of your programme
 - Demonstrate an “ideal” environment for fellows (flexible and expansive)
- Do not define individual (PhD) projects to minute detail yet have sufficient detail (and flexibility) to demonstrate a coherent and purposeful programme.

Starting out

- What is the broader skills / research gap?
 - Will your Fellows be highly desired by academia and industry?
- What is your programme aim (people/skills not “hard technical”)
- How many fellows do you need?
 - Justify, don't just pick an “impressive” number
- Academic/non-academic purpose & interactions.
- Partners:
 - Who will (and should) contribute to the training /development / secondments etc.?
 - Complimentary areas/expertise/type?
 - Mechanism for adding partners according to fellow needs?
- Multiple implementing partners?
 - How will the funding work?
 - Alignment of employment (and/or PhD study) requirements/benefits?

Starting out

- How will $1 + 1 = 3$? (added value of your programme)
 - Linking individual Fellows (be very careful with inherent dependence)
- Trans-disciplinarity is a must?
 - How do the DFs collaborate (outside of “standard” events)?
 - Not just technically but also soft skills?
 - Advancing intra-disciplinary SoA through trans-disciplinarity?



Trans-disciplinary →

Context	Primary Research Pillar (RP)			
	RP1	RP2	RP3	RP4
A	DF1	DF2	DF3	DF4
B	DF5	DF6	DF7	DF8
C	DF9	DF10	DF11	DF12
D	DF13	DF14	DF15	DF16

↑ Intra-disciplinary

Writing your proposal

- Download the RADIANCE COFUND handbook!
- Plan your section page count (according to weighting)
- Minimise the use of acronyms – if relevant repeat definitions with appropriately.
- Use and directly address the required subheadings
- Note how the “technical science” is not the focus of the first section.

My top tips

- *Excellence* is important (50%), make sure you “nail” “*impact* (30%) and *Implementation* (20%)
- Recruitment and evaluation process:
 - open, transparent, merit-based and equitable
 - Independence of reviewers
 - Make it robust – not complicated!
 - Is it “easily” comprehensible?
 - Use schematics/diagrams
- Be realistic (methods, targeted achievements, recruitment etc.)

My top tips

- What sets your proposal apart from the crowd?
 - How do you widen participation? Gender is a must – but “standard”
 - What can you offer in terms of support even to unsuccessful candidates (to encourage them to apply)
 - Recruitment campaign novelty – or very traditional?
 - Messaging and branding
- Strike the right balance of relevant (mandatory) and optional training:
 - Have the option for fellows to customise their training outside of that offered (but with strong guidance from programme to ensure relevance).
 - Do not overdo training – they still have a PhD to complete!
 - How long do you want to fund DFs?
 - How do you set fellows up for post-COFUND employment/research?