

Marie Curie Intra-European Fellowships (EIF)

Frequently Asked Questions

Warning: *The answers to Frequently Asked Questions do not supersede the rules and conditions laid out, in particular, in Council and Parliament Decisions relevant to the Sixth Framework Programme, the Specific Programme, the Human Resources and Mobility Work Programme, the Call for proposals or the Guidelines on evaluation and selection of proposals. These documents are available at: <http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/find-doc.htm>*

1. General information

Q: What are Marie Curie Intra-European Fellowships (EIF)?

A: They are individual fellowships that aim at providing advanced training tailored to researchers' individual needs in order to become professionally independent and to gain complementary or different scientific skills. The fellowships are also open to researchers resuming their careers after a break. The duration of these fellowships is between one and two years.

Q: Who can apply?

A: A researcher from EU or Associated States with at least four years of postgraduate research experience *or* a PhD and willing to spend a mobility period working in a host institution located in another EU or Associated State, different from his/her own and from that where they have been recently active. The researcher applies in liaison with the host institution.

Eligible host institutions are organisations active in research or research training (e.g. universities, research centres, commercial enterprises, etc.).

Q: Which research topics are supported?

A: Proposals from all areas of scientific and technological research of interest to the European Community are welcome and there are no predefined priority areas. Research fields within the EURATOM programme (nuclear fission or fusion) are however not eligible for funding within the Marie Curie schemes.

Q: How does it work?

A: The researcher applies to the Commission jointly with the host institution. If the proposal is selected, the Commission signs a contract with the host. The researcher signs an agreement/contract with the host institution.

Q: How does one apply?

A: Interested researchers should first read the EIF Handbook prepared by the Commission in order to understand the rules for participating in this scheme:

(http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/fp6/mariecurie-actions/information/publications_en.html).

Once they have decided to prepare a proposal, applicants should read carefully all relevant documents from the InfoPack available for each call for proposals on the CORDIS website:

http://fp6.cordis.lu/fp6/call_details.cfm?CALL_ID=158

The legal documents (listed in annex II of the Handbook and in chapter VII of the Guide for Proposers) might also help applicants to understand better the evaluation process, the rules for participation, contractual and financial issues, etc. The application is made through the on-line Electronic Proposal Submission System (EPSS): <http://fp6.cordis.lu/fp6/subprop.cfm>

2. Host institutions

Q: Is there a list of potential host organisations?

A: The eligible host institutions for Marie Curie EIF are organisations active in research or research training located in EU Member States or Associated States. The following types of research organisation can take part in EIF:

- National organisations (e.g. universities, research centres, etc.)
- Commercial enterprises, especially those of small and medium size (SMEs)
- Non-profit or charitable organisations (e.g. NGOs, trusts, etc.)
- The European Commission's Joint Research Centre

Q: Is there a difference between the way a private company and a university are treated when participating in a project?

A: No, there is no difference.

Q: Is there any limitation on the size or scale of eligible host organisations: for example, in terms of annual revenue, employee base, etc.?

A: There is no limit on the size or scale of the host organisation. Any organisation active in research or research training may apply but every host organisation will have to demonstrate its capacity to train the fellow and provide appropriate facilities and infrastructure.

Q: Can the European Commission be a host institution?

A: With the exception of the Commission's Joint Research Centre, the Commission itself cannot be a host institution.

Q: Is it possible to have more than one "scientist in charge" at the host organisation?

A: No. In the Intra-European scheme there is only one host institution with which the Commission will sign a contract and one scientist in charge at that host organisation.

Q: Could two researchers make applications with the same host group (and "scientist in charge")? Will they be treated equally, just as they would if they applied for different organisations?

A: Yes. Proposals will be evaluated independently but the host organisation must be capable of supporting both fellowships. This will be verified at the negotiation stage and a limit on the number of fellowships may be imposed.

Q: Is it possible to have two hosts focusing on two distinct complementary topics?

A: No. It is not possible to have two host organisations. The contract with the Commission will be signed with only ONE host organisation. The fellowship should take place at the host organisation for which the fellow has been selected. However, in some cases, stays away from the host organisation may be justified as part of collaboration or training so long as this is explicitly mentioned in the proposal, the evaluators agree and it is written into the contract.

Q: Once a proposal is submitted, is it possible to change the host organisation if the scientist in charge of the fellowship is moving?

A: No. One of the key issues when evaluating a proposal is the evaluation of the host organisation. Therefore, it would not be possible to change the host organisation after the proposal has been evaluated.

3. Eligible researchers

Q: Is there an age limit for researchers who wish to apply to the EIF scheme?

A: No, the previous age limit of 35 years (Fifth Framework Programme) no longer applies. The eligibility of a researcher is mainly based upon the number of years of active experience in research.

Q: In order to be eligible, researchers may not have been working in the country of the host institution for more than 12 months out of the previous three years. But what is the reference date – the day of the relevant deadline or the project start date?

A: For the individual-driven Marie Curie actions (Intra-European Fellowships) the reference date is the relevant deadline for submission of proposals. If at the deadline you have been in the country of your host organisation a few days less than a year you would still be eligible. What happens between the deadline and the signature of the Marie Curie contract does not count.

Q: Can a researcher who is a national of an EU Member State or Associated Country but working in a third country apply for an Intra-European Fellowship?

A: Yes, the fact that he/she is working in a third country at the time of the submission of his/her proposal does not prevent him/her from being eligible for an Intra-European Fellowship. If he/she can provide evidence that he/she has legally resided in a third country and carried out his/her principal activity (work studies, etc.) in a third country for at least four of the last five years immediately prior to the deadline for submission of proposals, he/she would even be eligible to carry out research in his/her country of origin.

Q: What happens if a researcher defends his/her PhD thesis within a period of eight months after the deadline of call for proposals but does not have the official papers by that time? Is it sufficient to present an official certificate (issued by his/her university) stating that he/she has defended his/her PhD and will have the documents soon?

A: The "eight-month limit" refers only to PhDs in cases where the applicant has less than four years' full-time experience. If the university administration declares that, within the eight months' limit, all technical work has finished, that a positive decision to award the PhD has been already taken and that there are no further steps to be taken other than waiting for formal certificate, then the PhD could be considered as being obtained. In this case (in the event of contract negotiation), the Commission should be provided with an official certificate before the researcher starts the project.

If however, at the end of the supplementary eight months, a decision has still to be taken (e.g. the plenary council of the Institute meeting has a discretionary power to approve the award of the PhD) and therefore there is a risk that the PhD will not be awarded to the researcher, then the PhD has not been obtained within eight months after the deadline. As a consequence, the researcher would be ineligible to benefit from a Marie Curie Intra-European Fellowship.

Q: Does the European Commission calculate the experience of the individual researcher up to the deadline of the relevant call for proposals for which the researcher applied or up to the time when the actual EIF research starts?

A: A fellow should have at least four years' full-time postgraduate research experience by the deadline for submission of proposals *or* expect to be awarded a PhD no later than eight months following the deadline.

Q: How are the four years of full-time research experience calculated?

A: Research undertaken after the researcher has gained a university degree/diploma giving access to doctoral studies (the degree/diploma must entitle the holder to embark on doctoral studies without having to acquire any further qualifications) in the country in which the degree/diploma was obtained can be counted. Applicants lacking the requisite years of full-time postgraduate research experience by the deadline for the submission of proposals are not eligible.

Q: Is it possible to include the time spent in full-time research before obtaining a Master's degree (title giving access to PhD) within the necessary four years of professional research experience, as stated in the handbook?

A: In some cases. In certain countries, the bachelor's degree qualifies the holder to pursue a PhD. In the case of someone having pursued a research-based Master's degree *following* the award of such a bachelor's degree, this time can be counted.

Q: Is a researcher who has already been a Marie Curie Fellow as a doctoral student still eligible for a Marie Curie Intra-European Fellowship as an experienced researcher?

A: Yes, if he/she is an experienced researcher (with more than four years of full-time post-graduate research experience *or* a PhD).

4. Project implementation

Q: For a successful proposal, when is the latest time a researcher should expect to start working at the host institution?

A: In general, it takes eight months from the submission deadline till the contract is signed. The latest date when the project activities should begin must be within 12 months from the date the contract enters into force which, by default, is the day of the signature of the contract by the coordinator and the Commission.

Q: Is a candidate encouraged to devote all his time to research on his proposal or is he expected to take part in other activities such as teaching and other collaborative research?

A: Yes. Researchers are encouraged to acquire complementary skill in the course of their training. These could include learning different scientific skills, research management skills, teaching, etc.

Q: Is part-time work allowed during the stay at the host institution?

A: No. Fellows must work full time on their project. Exceptionally, part-time work can be accepted for family reasons if it does not interfere with the execution of the project.

Q: Is it permissible to have a one-year fellowship divided into four periods of three months each (to be done in four years) or periods of four months (to be done in three years)?

A: No. The splits could only be accepted in very exceptional circumstances and if it does not affect the project. Split stays can be taken into consideration if they are justified for personal reasons or if they are beneficial for the training project. In no case may they interfere with the development of the project. The possibility must be clearly addressed in the proposal and integrated in the work plan.

Q: It is possible to apply for an Intra-European Fellowship for more than two years

A: No, the maximum duration of an Intra-European fellowship is 24 months.

Q: Can the individual researcher start to work at the host institution a few months after the signature of the contract? Is it possible to have a delay between the moment when the contract is signed and the moment when the researcher is actually starting to work?

A: The start date has to be notified by the contractor during the negotiations with the Commission. Researchers will have to start their fellowships 12 months at the latest after signature of the contract.

Q: What happens if a fellow resigns in the middle of his/her research project?

A: The host institute must inform the Commission, and provide a final report and a cost statement for the period which the fellow worked. The Commission will then terminate the contract prematurely.

5. Financial and contractual aspects

Q. What does the funding from the European Union cover?

A: The most substantial part of the funding goes towards covering the expenses related to the researcher. The researcher receives allowances to cover monthly living expenses, the costs related to travel and mobility, as well as a career exploratory allowance. Likewise, the host will manage the contribution for expenses directly related to the execution of the project by the researcher. In addition, the host receives contributions towards overheads and management costs.

Q: How much funding is involved per fellowship?

A: The Community contribution depends on several issues: the researcher's level of experience, the country where the host is located, the researcher's family situation, and whether or not it is a laboratory-based project.

Q: Where do applicants have to provide financial information about the proposal?

A: There is no need for any budget indication at the proposal submission stage except for the reintegration phase.

Q: Does a long-term domestic partnership that is legally recognised by the relevant national authority qualify for "full mobility allowance"?

A: Yes, if the status is recognised by national legislation of the host organisation the researcher is eligible for a full mobility allowance.

Q: Is a full mobility allowance relevant to divorced people?

A: Yes, if they have dependant children.

Q: Is a researcher eligible for a full mobility allowance if he/she is not married at the time of submitting a proposal but will be at the start of fellowship?

A: The eligibility for full mobility allowance refers to the status at the end of the negotiation phase (Commission selection decision) which is typically six months after the deadline for submission of proposals.

Q: Research organisations can decide whether they take on a researcher under an employment contract or a fixed amount fellowship. What is the living allowance in the case of fixed amount of fellowship?

A: The host institution can opt either to recruit a fellow under the employment contract or a fixed amount fellowship. Under the employment contract, the monthly allowances include all compulsory deductions (social security, pension, etc.) under nationally applicable legislation. Fellowships are recommended for short stays if this is compatible with national legislation, as no taxes are deducted. However, fellowships should be the exception rather than the rule.

Q: Can part of the EC contribution to an EIF be spent on laboratory equipment?

A: The host organisation should have all of the equipment necessary to carry out the fellowship. A contribution is made to the research costs to be spent on the project. Details are given in the Guidelines for Management and Reporting, and the scientist in charge should ensure that s/he is familiar with the relevant rules and that the money is spent on the project.

Q: There is a difference in the EC contribution to the participation expenses of eligible researchers between laboratory-based and non-laboratory-based research projects. How is this handled in a project that combines both aspects?

A: In this case, the recommendations of the evaluators will be followed. They will assess whether the project should be considered laboratory-based or not.

Q: Are there any situations where the holder of an EIF can also hold a second (non-EU funded) contract simultaneously, or is the assumption that the fellow is solely funded by the EU on the EIF and their time is 100% committed to the pursuit of research under the EIF?

A: No. The fellow is expected to work full time on the Marie Curie Intra-European Fellowship.

Q: How does intellectual property work in the context of Marie Curie actions? Are the data obtained the property of the EU or the leading scientist/researcher?

A: The property of the knowledge generated during the project belongs to the contractor(s). For further details, applicants are invited to read the General Conditions of the contract, in particular part C, article 29 and ff which deal with intellectual property issues http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/fp6/working-groups/model-contract/pdf/mc-annex2multi_en.pdf or contact the Intellectual Property Rights Helpdesk (details in the Guide for Proposers, section VI.1).

Q: What happens if a fellow resigns in the middle of his/her research project?

A: The host institute must inform the Commission, and provide a final report and a cost statement for the period which the fellow worked. The Commission will then terminate the contract prematurely.

6. Proposal preparation and submission

Q: How does one apply?

A: Interested researchers should first read the EIF Handbook prepared by the Commission in order to understand the rules for participating in this scheme:

(http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/fp6/mariecurie-actions/information/publications_en.html). Once they have decided to prepare a proposal, applicants should read carefully all relevant documents from the InfoPack available for each call for proposals on the CORDIS website:

http://fp6.cordis.lu/fp6/call_details.cfm?CALL_ID=158

The legal documents (listed in annex II of the Handbook and in chapter VII of the Guide for Proposers) might also help applicants to understand better the evaluation process, the rules for participation, contractual and financial issues, etc. The application is made through the on-line Electronic Proposal Submission System (EPSS): <http://fp6.cordis.lu/fp6/subprop.cfm>

Q: Who should prepare the application?

A: The proposal should be prepared jointly by the fellow and the host institution. Usually, it is the fellow who prepares the proposal and the host institution should agree on the content.

Q: Is there a way to consult previous successful applications?

A: No, because of the rules governing data protection the Commission is not allowed to divulge this kind of information. National Contact Points (list available at <http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/ncp.htm>) are able to give advice on how to prepare a successful proposal.

Q: Who should register in the EPSS?

A: It is strongly recommended that the potential research fellow (the individual researcher) registers as the proposal coordinator and applies for the coordinator user name and password. In the case of EIF, there is only one participant (the host organisation that will be hosting the individual researcher) so the potential research fellow can fill in all A forms, including A2 on behalf of and with the agreement of the host institution.

Q: Who has to submit the proposal, the individual researcher or the host institution?

A: Either the researcher or the host institution may submit the application – it is usually the researcher.

Q: When does the European Commission give a proposal a number?

A: The proposal number is assigned by the European Commission after the submission of the proposal.

Q: When filling the registration form for the EPSS, how do applicants choose the theme that corresponds to the Marie Curie EIF?

A: The themes are available on the relevant call information page. Please go to the call page, select the call and, then, "Areas and instruments addressed within this call" and the activity code will appear (Mobility 2.1). Selecting a theme is not critical for the registration and will not, in any case, influence the proposal submission.

Q: Does an application need to have letters of recommendation?

A: Up to three confidential referee's assessment of the applicant may be submitted. In such cases, the applicant encodes the email address of the referee(s) of his/her choice when registering on the EPSS. The referee(s) should not have any direct link with the proposal:

- he/she should not be working in the host institute/group where the project will take place;
- he/she should not be a relative of the fellow.

The referee(s) will then submit their assessments electronically and the applicant will receive a notification that they have done so. In order to be taken into account for the evaluation, the referee's assessment must be received by the Commission before or on the deadline.

Q: Although proposals have to be submitted jointly by the individual researcher and the host institution, are there some parts that are expected to be written only by the researcher and others only by the supervisor in the host institution?

A: The proposal (part B) should be prepared jointly by the fellow and the host institution. The applicant can also fill in all sections in B referring to the host institution on behalf of and with the agreement of the host institution.

Q: Is the subject of a research project proposed under the EIF scheme bound to the 'FP6 Priority Areas'?

A: No. The Human Resources and Mobility (HRM) activity aims to finance training and other career development opportunities for researchers (Marie Curie Actions). Each Marie Curie Action is open to all fields of research that contribute to the European Community's scientific and technological objectives. These are not confined to the seven priority thematic areas that have been adopted for the main "Focusing and Integrating European Research" block of the Sixth Framework Programme. The activity is entirely 'bottom up' and researchers are invited to submit proposals on any area of research.

Q: Can a researcher apply for a Marie Curie EIF with a research project in fusion energy or should he/she rather apply within the EURATOM programme?

A: Research fields within the EURATOM programme (nuclear fission or fusion) are not eligible for funding within the Marie Curie schemes. Separate Calls for Proposals are organised from time to time under the EURATOM programme.

Q: Should an applicant for an EIF present their diplomas, at any stage, to certify his/her status?

A: No certificates or any other documents are necessary at the proposal stage. They will be verified during the negotiation phase.

Q: Does a Personal Career Development Plan have to be included in the proposal itself?

A: A Personal Career Development Plan is established at the time of appointment and is not part of the proposal itself. A Personal Career Development Plan means a plan established by the researcher, together with the scientist in charge of supervising his/her research training activities, indicating his/her training and/or transfer of knowledge needs and scientific objectives as well as measures foreseen to meet these objectives, plus a description of his/her research training activities and, later on, a report on whether or not these objectives were successfully met.

Q: Is it possible to submit two or more proposals for EIF action?

A: No. For Individual Driven Actions (including EIF), one individual researcher cannot have more than one proposal in an application procedure at the same time. This does not however

apply to host institutions which may make simultaneous applications. The application procedure ends when there is an official decision on the outcome of the proposal.

Q: Is there a preferred language which should be used in applications?

Proposals may be submitted in any official EU language but the abstract must be provided in English. The language used most frequently by the external evaluators is English. If your proposal is not in English, a translation of the full proposal would be useful for the evaluators but it is not obligatory.

Q: How does the European Commission confirm the safe receipt of an EIF proposal?

A: Once a proposal has been received and registered by the Commission, an 'acknowledgement of receipt' will be despatched to the applicant. All proposers who have submitted a proposal to a call will receive this at the latest one month after the deadline for submission to this call. Proposers who have not received an acknowledgement of receipt by that time should contact the HRM Activity Information Desk (rtd-mariecurie-actions@cec.eu.int). The sending of an acknowledgement of receipt by the Commission does not imply that a proposal has been accepted as eligible for evaluation.

If the number of submitted proposals is very high, the Commission might only send an e-mail to the coordinators indicating the web page where the provisional list of submitted proposals has been or will be published. In this list, proposals will be presented by the acronym and the proposal number. To check whether a proposal has been registered, applicants will be invited to consult the relevant website mentioned in the e-mail.

Q: Does the electronic message sent by the EPSS system after electronic submission constitute an official acknowledgement of receipt from the Commission?

A: No, it does not, but it is a clear indication that the proposal has been received, and also provides the proposal number.

Q: Do projects placed on the reserve list of a previous call for proposals automatically go forward to the next call?

A: No. The proposals on the reserve list within the previous call are not automatically transmitted to the next call. Applicants should resubmit a revised version, specifying that it had been submitted before, mentioning the proposal number and the main differences in the new proposal. The proposal's previous assessment mark will not be taken into account.

Q: What is the procedure for withdrawing a proposal?

A: If an applicant wishes to withdraw a proposal he/she has to inform the Commission of this by sending all the details (name of the applicant, title of the proposal, proposal number, acronym) to Ms. Rosaria Mazzone (Rosaria.mazzone@cec.eu.int) indicating clearly "Withdrawal of EIF fellowship proposal".

7. Evaluation

Q: Is it possible to update applicants' CVs after the deadline for submission of proposals (for example, if new publications have been approved)?

A: No additional information submitted after the deadline will be taken into consideration for evaluation. In the case of successful proposals, the eligibility check will also be performed during the contract negotiation phase when any additional data/information will be verified.

Q: If a confidential referee's assessment is sent to the Commission after the deadline, will it be added to the application?

A: No, any referee's assessment submitted after the deadline will not be taken into consideration for the evaluation.

Q: How are applicants informed of the outcome of a proposal submitted under the EIF scheme?

A: The preliminary evaluation results are usually published on the web within three or four months after the submission deadline.

Q: How are proposals classified in the evaluation results? Is it simply based on the total score awarded, or are other criteria considered?

A: All submitted proposals have to undergo a peer-review evaluation. Based on the evaluation results, the proposals are ranked and the Commission draws up a priority list of those proposals for immediate negotiation, taking into account the available budget. The ranks A, B and C are separated as follows:

A: the necessary budget is available

B: reserve list (in case of withdrawal of a candidate in A). It is unlikely that all B-list fellows will be financed

C: although projects are of good quality, the budget is not sufficient and the projects will be rejected

After negotiations, a formal Commission Decision is made and contracts signed with successful proposers.

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Q: What happens if the "scientist-in-charge" is not able to participate in the negotiations and contract-signing with the European Commission? In what way would his/her presence be needed for the negotiations?

A: The negotiations will be done by e-mail. The host institution will be informed in due time when the negotiations will start. The absence of your scientist-in-charge should not be a problem since the contracts will be signed by an administrative official from the host institution who is authorised to sign contracts. This is usually a different person from the scientist-in-charge.

Q: What is the procedure for withdrawing a proposal?

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