

Marie Curie Incoming International Fellowships (IIF)

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 Incoming International Fellowships (IIF)?

A: These fellowships aim to attract top-class researchers from third countries to work and undertake research training in Europe with a view to developing mutually beneficial research co-operation between Europe and third countries.

Q: Who can apply?

A: A researcher who is a national of any third country with at least four years' full-time post-graduate research experience *or* a PhD and wishing to spend a mobility period working in a host institution located in an EU Member State or Associated State.

Q: What is meant by “third country”?

A: “Third country” refers to any country that is neither one of the 25 EU Member States, nor an Associated State to the EU Framework Programme (Bulgaria, Iceland, Israel, Liechtenstein, Norway, Romania, Switzerland and Turkey).

Q: Does the IIF scheme provide assistance to fellow researchers who wish to return to their home country after the incoming phase?

A: Yes, but only to those coming from developing countries, or emerging and transition economies and, typically, for half the duration of the first phase.

Q: How does it work?

A: The researcher applies in liaison with the host institution (and with the re-integration host, if there is a return phase). If the proposal is selected, the Commission signs a contract with the host organisation(s) which then sign an agreement/contract with the researcher.

Q: Which research topics are supported?

A: Proposals from all areas of scientific and technological research of interest to the European Community are accepted and there are no 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 one apply?

A: Interested researchers should first read the IIF 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=160

The relevant legal documents (listed in the Guide for Proposers) will also help applicants to understand the evaluation process, rules of 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 organisations

Q: What are the characteristics of eligible host organisations?

A: The eligible host institutions for Marie Curie IIF are organisations active in research or researcher training located in EU Member States or Associated States. Examples of research organisations which can take part include:

- National organisations (e.g. universities, research centres, etc.)
- Commercial concerns, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (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: Are there specific eligibility criteria for the host organisations of the reintegration phase?

A: They should be legal entities distinct from the incoming host organisation and located in developing countries, or emerging and transition economies, except those with which the Sixth Framework Programme has no co-operation agreement. Eligibility will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Q: May the potential partner and host organisations have also applied for funding under another Marie Curie scheme?

A: No, the host organisation may have more than one proposal in the application procedure at the same time but an individual researcher may not apply for two individual fellowships at the same time.

Q: Can the European Commission be a host organisation?

A: The Commission cannot be a host institution because it is not a research organisation. The only exception is the Commission's Joint Research Centre.

Q: Can the scientist in charge be a university teacher not officially related to the host organisation?

A: The scientist in charge must be the person responsible for the project at the host organisation.

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

A: No, in the international incoming scheme there is only one host institution with which the Commission will sign a contract and one scientist in charge at that host institution.

Q: May one host group (and scientist in charge) make more than one application to host an IIF?

A: Yes, a host organisation may make more than one application to the same scheme, although the number of contracts awarded may be limited. The host organisation will have to demonstrate its capacity to train each fellow and provide appropriate facilities and infrastructure.

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: One of the key issues when evaluating a proposal is the evaluation of the host institution. Therefore, it would not be possible to change the host institution after the proposal has been evaluated.

Q: Is it possible to split the incoming phase between two or more host organisations focusing on distinct complementary topics?

A: No. The contract with the European Commission will be signed with only one host institution – it is not possible to have two host institutions in the incoming phase. The fellowship should take place at the host institution for which the fellow has been selected. However, in some cases, stays away from the host institution may be justified as part of a collaboration or training programme if this is indispensable to the execution of the project and explicitly foreseen in the proposal (part B) and in the contract with the host. Such visits could include attending conferences, training courses, short visits, etc.

Q: In the case of proposals including a reintegration phase, could the reintegration organisation be the coordinator of the whole project?

A: No, the contractor (coordinating institution) must be established in one of the Member/Associated States.

Q: What kind of commitment is expected from the reintegration host institution? Does it include the guarantee to provide a stable position for the researcher?

A: A contract is issued with the reintegration host which commits it to assure an effective and long-lasting reintegration of the researcher for at least two years.

3. Eligible researchers

Q: What research experience is required from third country researchers who wish to apply for IIF?

A: A fellow must have four years of full-time postgraduate research experience by the deadline for proposal submission, *or* a doctoral degree (PhD) at the latest eight months after the deadline (independently of the time taken to acquire it).

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: 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, may s/he present an official certificate (issued by his/her university) stating that s/he 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 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: Is there a chance that an application made by a researcher who has not published papers (or only published one or two) can be positively evaluated in the framework of the IIF scheme?

A: Yes, research results other than publications are a valuable part of the assessment of the researcher.

Q: Are all experienced researchers who are nationals of a third country eligible for the IIF scheme?

A: Yes, except those treated as being from Member States or Associated States because of their presence for more than four of the previous five years in the territory of a Member State or Associated State (at the deadline for submission of proposals). They are eligible for Intra-European Fellowships.

Furthermore, researchers who have resided in a Member State or Associated State for more than 12 months in the three years immediately prior to the deadline for submission of

proposals are not eligible to carry out an IIF in the same country. Short stays such as holidays are not taken into account.

Q: Does the Commission carry out eligibility pre-checks on a one-to-one basis regarding research experience?

A: It is up to the candidate to present the information on his/her full-time postgraduate research experience in a way that the external evaluators will be satisfied that he/she complies with the minimum requirements. Eligibility is checked prior to evaluation and will be checked again in the event of contract negotiation.

For further, more specific advice you should contact your National Contact Point at:

<http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/ncp.htm>

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

A: No, Incoming International Fellowships are available to researchers of all ages. The eligibility of a researcher is mainly based upon the number of years of active experience in research.

Q: Are candidate researchers with and without a reintegration phase treated equally?

A: Yes, each proposal is judged on its own merits.

Q: Can researchers from Member States or Associated States who have resided and have had their principal activity in a third country for at least four of the last five years benefit from Incoming International Fellowships?

A: No, the IIF scheme is specifically dedicated to third-country nationals. For nationals of EU Member States or Associated States who have been active in research in a third country for a long period, the applicable schemes would be the International Reintegration Grants and Intra-European Fellowships (having stayed in a third country for at least four of the last five years at the relevant deadline for submission of proposals).

Q: Does dual nationality with an EU Member State make applications ineligible?

A: No. In the case of a researcher holding more than one nationality, he or she will be able to carry out a period of mobility in the country of his or her nationality in which she or he has not resided during the previous five years.

4. Project implementation

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

A: In general, it takes eight months from the submission deadline until 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 it possible to divide a full fellowship period into two or more periods?

A: Splits can only be accepted in very exceptional circumstances and if they do 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. The possibility must be clearly addressed in the proposal and integrated into the work plan of the contract.

Q: Are candidates encouraged to devote all their time to research, or are they expected to take part in other activities, such as teaching and other collaborative research?

A: Yes. Researchers are expected 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: Fellows must work full time on their project. Exceptionally, part-time work can be accepted for family reasons, provided it does not interfere with the execution of the project.

Q: If a project has been successfully completed before the end of the duration period, can the contract be ended sooner?

A: During evaluation the experts will look at the coherence between the content of the project and the requested duration. The contract may only be terminated earlier than the requested duration in cases which can be duly justified for personal or professional reasons. The EC will, however, make a contribution only for the months actually worked.

The extension of the contract is not possible unless there is a suspension of the project due to personal or family reasons (parental leave). This clearly implies that, under normal circumstances, the duration remains the same.

Q: What happens in the event of a researcher abandoning the reintegration phase at the end of the incoming phase?

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

Q: Is the reintegration phase upon the completion of the mobility period compulsory for some researchers? What good reason is there to include a reintegration phase in a proposal?

A: The reintegration phase is intended to help to counteract the brain drain and is only applicable to researchers from developing countries and emerging economies. Where relevant, the evaluators will assess the benefits of the reintegration phase to the researcher and to Europe, including the quality of both the host and the project. The reason to include a

reintegration phase is to facilitate the researcher returning to his/her home institution. It is not compulsory.

5. Financial and contractual aspects

Q: How much funding is involved per fellowship?

A: The Community contribution depends on several factors: the researcher's level of experience, the country where the training research activities will be carried out, the researcher's family situation, and whether it is a laboratory-based project or not.

Q: What does the funding cover during the incoming phase?

A: During the incoming phase, the researcher receives allowances to cover monthly living expenses, as well as the costs related to travel and mobility. The host manages the expenses directly related to the execution of the project by the researcher. In addition, the host receives contributions to overheads and management costs.

Q: What does the funding cover during the reintegration phase?

During the reintegration phase, the grant is to be used as a contribution to the scientific costs related to the researcher's project at the reintegration host institute, on a real-cost basis and with a maximum ceiling.

Q: Is there any monthly salary or stipend available for the fellow during his/her re-integration phase?

A: No. The Community contribution for the reintegration phase does not cover the monthly living allowance.

Q: Does the fellowship cover moving expenses (for books, office supplies, papers, etc.) which are helpful to the research?

A: The fellow receives a flat-rate travel allowance (dependent on the distance s/he has to travel). Part of this allowance could be used for moving expenses.

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 the national legislation of the host country then the researcher is eligible for full mobility allowance.

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: If a project has been successfully completed before the end of the duration period, can the contract be ended sooner?

A: During evaluation the experts will look at the coherence between the content of the project and the requested duration. The contract may only be terminated earlier than the requested duration in cases which can be duly justified for personal or professional reasons. The EC will, however, make a contribution only for the months actually worked.

The extension of the contract is not possible unless there is a suspension of the project due to personal or family reasons (parental leave). This clearly implies that, under normal circumstances, the duration remains the same.

Q: What happens in the event of a researcher abandoning the reintegration phase at the end of the incoming phase?

A: The host organisation must inform the Commission, 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 IIF 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:

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The relevant legal documents (listed in the Guide for Proposers) will also help applicants to understand the evaluation process, rules of 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: Is it possible to submit two or more proposals for IIF?

A: No. The Work Programme specifies that one researcher cannot have more than one proposal in an application procedure at the same time. However, this does not apply to the host organisation.

Q: Can an individual with dual nationality (EU and third country) apply in parallel to IIF and EIF?

A: No, each applicant-researcher may only have one proposal in an application procedure at a time for individual fellowships (EIF, OIF, IIF), Excellence Grants (EXT) and Chairs (EXC). Applicants who have submitted multiple applications to one or more of the above actions should be aware that their proposals may be deemed ineligible.

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: Is it possible to apply only for the first phase, and later on, decide about re-integration?

A: No. The reintegration phase must be applied for at the same time as the incoming phase.

Q: Who should prepare the application?

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

Q: Who should register in the EPSS?

A: It is recommended that the potential research fellow registers as the proposal coordinator and applies for the coordinator username and password.

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

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

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 2.3). Selecting a theme is not critical for the registration and will not, in any case, influence the proposal submission.

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

A: The European Commission assigns the proposal number after the submission of the proposal.

Q: The A forms of the application concern which participant?

A: Details of the host organisation and scientist in charge should be entered on page A2 and details of the fellow should be entered on page A3. If there is only one participant (the host organisation in the EU Member State or Associated State), the applicant researcher can fill in all A forms, including A2, on behalf and with the agreement of the host institution. Therefore, the details should be entered for the applicant researcher and, in this case, the coordinator (A3), as well as for the host organisation (participant) with whom the Commission will sign the contract, if the proposal is successful.

Q: How strict are the length limits defined for each section of Part B? Is there a suggested font size?

A: Certain sections of part B have a mandatory maximum length in numbers of pages. Evaluators will not consider extra material. The recommended font is Times New Roman 12.

Q: How many A2 forms should be filled in if a reintegration phase is foreseen in the proposal?

A: Two A2 forms must be completed: the first one for the EU/Associated State host (participant number one) and the second one for the third country (participant number two).

Q: What is meant by 'legal address' for the individual researcher in form A3?

A: The legal address in form A3 refers to the country where the researcher is residing when he or she submits the proposal. If the proposal is successful, it should be noted that the Commission will contact the host institution (and not the researcher).

Q: In the case of a researcher coming from a third country not listed as an emerging and transition economy nor a developing country, should information about national funding for the reintegration phase be presented in the application? Is there a protocol that should be followed under such circumstances?

A: No. In such cases, the application will be judged purely as an incoming fellowship.

Q: When preparing his or her proposal, are candidates encouraged to devote all their time to research or are they expected to take part in other activities, such as teaching and other collaborative research?

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

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

A: No, certificates or any other documents are not necessary at the proposal stage. They will be verified during the negotiation phase.

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 does the European Commission confirm the safe receipt of an IIF 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 submissions. 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. On this list, proposals are arranged by acronym and 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: 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, and providing the following information in part B8: proposal number and the main differences between the new proposal and the old one. 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 IIF 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?

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

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 IIF fellowship proposal".