

Marie Curie Outgoing International Fellowships (OIF)

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 Outgoing International Fellowships (OIF)?

A: They are individual fellowships that aim to reinforce the international dimension of European researchers' careers by giving them the opportunity to receive training (from one to two years) at a world-class research organisation in a third country, and then to apply the experience gained in a return host institution in a Member State or Associated State (for typically half the duration of the first phase).

Q: Who can apply?

A: A researcher from an EU or Associated State with at least four years of full-time research experience *or* a PhD who is willing to spend a mobility period working in a host institution located in a third country. The researcher applies in liaison with the return host institution.

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: Are there specific eligibility criteria for the host organisations of the outgoing phase?

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

Q: How does it work?

A: The researcher applies to the Commission jointly with a return host institution in a Member or Associated State and in agreement with a partner institution in a third country. If the proposal is selected, the Commission signs a contract with the return host institution for a total duration of up to three years. The researcher signs an agreement/contract with the return host institution. The researcher is then effectively seconded to the third country institution.

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 OIF 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](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=159

The relevant legal documents (listed in the Handbook and in the Guide for Proposers) will also help applicants to understand better 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 OIF for both the outgoing and the return phase are organisations active in research or research training. 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: Which organisation is responsible for the Marie Curie project?

A: The contract is concluded with the return host institution in the Member or Associated State for a total duration of up to three years. The institution in the third country is considered to be a partner organisation. In an OIF proposal, the host institution in the Member or Associated State should always be presented as participant number one and the partner institution in a third country as participant number two.

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

A: The host organisation may have more than one proposal in the application procedure at the same time. The researcher, however, may not be involved in two individual fellowships at the same time. The host organisation must be able to demonstrate its capacity to host the fellows and to provide adequate facilities, infrastructure, supervision and support.

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 split the outgoing phase between two (or more) partner organisations focusing on distinct complementary topics, and stay one year in the first and another year in the second?

A: No. It is not possible to have two outgoing host institutions. 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 collaboration or training so long as this is explicitly mentioned in the proposal, the evaluators agree and it is written into the contract. Such visits could include attending conferences, training courses, short visits etc.

Q: Is a researcher allowed to carry out the return phase of the fellowship in an organisation where he/she is working or has previously worked?

A: Yes. Researchers may spend the return phase in a host institution in any Member/Associated State including their own and at that institution where they have been working previously.

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

A: No. The scientist in charge must be the person responsible for the project at the host institution.

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

A: No, in the outgoing international 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: Once a proposal is submitted, is it possible to change the host institution 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 institution. Therefore, it would not be possible to change the host institution after the proposal has been evaluated.

3. Eligible researchers

Q: What research experience is required from researchers who wish to apply for OIF?

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?

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 already been 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 exists 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 OIF scheme?

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

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: Are third country researchers who have legally resided and had their main activity for a certain number of years in a Member State/Associated State and treated as nationals of this State, eligible to apply?

A: No, researchers fulfilling this criterion are eligible for an Intra-European Fellowship but not for an Outgoing International Fellowship which is only open to researchers who are nationals of a Member or Associated State.

Q: Is there an age limit for researchers who wish to apply for the OIF 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: Can researchers who, by the deadline for submission of proposals, have already spent more than 12 months over the past three years in a third country still apply for an Outgoing International Fellowship in this same country?

A: No. At the start of their fellowship, researchers must not have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in the country of their third country host organisation for more than 12 months in the previous three years.

Q: Is a researcher who has already been the recipient of a Marie Curie Fellowship as a doctoral student still eligible for a Marie Curie Outgoing International Fellowship?

A: Yes. There is an overall cumulative maximum for early stage training of four years but this does not apply to OIF.

Q: Does dual nationality with a third country make applications ineligible?

A: In the case of nationals holding more than one nationality, they can carry out a period of mobility in the country of their nationality in which they have not resided during the previous five years. Short stays such as holidays are not counted.

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 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: 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 skills in the course of their training. These could be learning different scientific skills, research management skills, teaching etc.

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: Is it possible to prolong an outgoing phase which was initially supposed to last less than two years (if both the non-EU and the EU organisations agree that this would be beneficial to the project)?

A: No, extending the contract is not possible, unless the project is suspended for personal or family reasons (parental leave). This clearly implies that, in any case, the duration remains the same.

Q: Would it be possible to have a third year abroad (financed by sources other than the EU) before the reintegration year at the return host institution?

A: Normally the reintegration phase commences directly after the end of the outgoing phase. If the host institution agrees, however, a request may be made to the Commission to interrupt the contract. If this is a possibility which is known about at the application stage, it should be presented then.

Q: Is the fellow allowed to make short visits to other research organisations in the third country during the outgoing phase?

A: As a general rule, fellowships must take place at the organisations for which the fellow has been selected. However, in some cases, stays away may be justified as part of a collaboration or training programme. However, wherever possible this should be included in the proposal. In cases where the proposal does not mention these stays and an unforeseen need appears during the execution of the fellowship, a request must be addressed to the Commission with a justification and details of the stays. This change of work plan may be re-evaluated by independent experts before approval by the Commission services and, if approved, may require an amendment to the contract.

Q: Is part-time work permitted during the stay at the return 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.

5. Financial and contractual aspects

Q: What does the funding cover?

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

Q: How much funding is involved per fellowship?

A: This Community contribution depends on several issues: the researcher's level of experience, the countries 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: Knowing that the EU contribution to overheads will be 10% of the direct costs for the entire duration of the fellowship, how will this part of the budget be divided between partner institution and the return host institution?

A: The amount corresponds to a maximum of 10% of each host's direct costs.

Q: How are the costs related to management activities divided between outgoing and reintegration phases?

A: The amount payable is a maximum of 3% of the Community contribution for each of the host organisations.

Q: Do researchers who are carrying out the reintegration phase in their own country benefit from the mobility allowances?

A: No, in this case no mobility allowance is payable.

Q: If the cost of living increases significantly in a third country during the course of a project, can the European Commission update the correction coefficients?

A: No. The rates applying to a contract cannot be modified.

Q: As regards the mobility allowance, what happens to an applicant who is not married on the date of the submission of the proposal but is planning to do so later, during the course of the project?

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. If the fellow changes his/her legal status after this, the mobility allowance will not be modified.

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, 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: Is it possible to prolong an outgoing phase which was initially supposed to last less than two years (if both the non-EU and the EU organisations agree that this would be beneficial to the project)?

A: No, extending the contract is not possible unless the project is suspended for personal or family reasons (parental leave). This clearly implies that, in any case, the duration remains the same.

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 if a fellow resigns during the outgoing phase?

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 early.

Q: Is it possible to prolong an outgoing phase which was initially supposed to last less than two years (if both the non-EU and the EU organisations agree that this would be beneficial to the project)?

A: No, extending the contract is not possible unless the project is suspended for personal or family reasons (parental leave). This clearly implies that, in any case, the duration remains the same.

6. Proposal preparation and submission

Q: How does one apply?

A: Interested researchers should first read the OIF 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 Handbook and in the Guide for Proposers) will also help applicants to understand better 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 OIF?

A: No. The Work Programme specifies that for individual actions one researcher cannot have more than one proposal in an application procedure at the same time. This does not however apply to the host organisation.

Q: Is it possible to ask for an OIF and an EIF at the same time?

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: 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: Who should register on the EPSS?

A: It is strongly recommended that the potential research fellow (the individual researcher) registers as the proposal coordinator and apply for the coordinator user name and password.

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

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

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: 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, but it is usually the researcher who does so.

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?

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: In A2 forms, is the question of "Previously submitted similar proposals or signed contracts?" related to all the proposals of each of the institutions or just to the proposals related to applicant researchers?

A: The A2 forms concern the host organisations. They should provide details of any similar proposals or signed contracts not just with the applicant researcher.

Q: What is meant by the 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, however, it should be noted that the Commission will contact the host institution (and not the researcher).

Q: Should an applicant for an OIF 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: 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 skills in the course of their training. These could be learning different scientific skills, research management skills, teaching, etc.

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

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

Q: Does the applicant need to send the signature and stamp of the scientific supervisor and/or the host university on a separate form to the European Commission?

A: There is no need for any additional documents or signatures at the proposal submission stage. It is up to the applicant and the host institution to give the precise and correct information.

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: 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: How does the European Commission confirm the safe receipt of an OIF 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: 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.mazzonze@cec.eu.int) indicating clearly "Withdrawal of OIF 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 not 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 OIF 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 of 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 available budget is not sufficient and the projects will be rejected

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

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, and providing the following information: 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.

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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.