

Marie Curie Transfer of Knowledge (ToK)

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>*

General information

Q: What is the aim of the Marie Curie scheme for Transfer of Knowledge?

A: The Marie Curie scheme for Transfer of Knowledge is directed at European research organisations (universities, research centres, enterprises, etc.) in need of developing new areas of competence.

There are two kinds of fellowships:

1. In the Development Scheme (ToK-DEV), the fellowships aim to develop the research potential of host entities, with priority to entities situated in less-favoured regions of the Member States and in the Associated Candidate Countries.
2. In the Industry-Academia Strategic Partnership Scheme (ToK-IAP), the fellowships aim to create and develop real strategic and durable partnerships between the academic world and the world of enterprise, in particular SMEs.

Q: Who can apply?

A: A proposal is submitted by legal entities (e.g. industrial/commercial firms, SMEs, universities, research organisations, international organisations). If the proposal is successful, researchers with more than four years of experience can be recruited, sent away to seek new knowledge (ToK-DEV), or be exchanged mutually between partners (ToK-IAP).

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 pre-defined priority areas.

Q: How much funding can a ToK project receive?

A: The overall budget of a ToK project depends mainly on the number of participants and the amount of recruitment or exchange that can be provided to the researchers. As an indication, based on the experience from the first call for this action, the funding will vary between approximately €200,000 and €1 200 000

Q: How can the funding be used?

A: The main part of the funding is for the benefit of the researchers who are recruited or seconded, including their living allowances, travel costs, etc. This is paid according to rates defined by the Commission and available in the Work Programme. The remainder of the budget comprises a contribution towards research costs together with overheads and management-related expenses.

Q: How does one apply?

A: Interested organisations should first read the ToK Handbook prepared by the Commission in order to understand the rules for participating in this scheme (available on the website of the Marie Curie Actions: 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=156 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>

Host organisations

Q: What are the characteristics of eligible host organisations?

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

- National organisations (e.g. universities, research centres, etc.)
- Commercial enterprises, including SMEs
- Non-profit or charitable organisations (e.g. NGOs, trusts, etc.)
- International European interest organisations (e.g. CERN, EMBL, ESA, etc.)
- The European Commission's Joint Research Centre

In the case of ToK-DEV, priority will be given to those organisations located in less-favoured regions of the Member States and in the Associated Candidate Countries.

Q: How many host organisations must participate in a TOK project?

A: In a ToK-DEV project, there is only one legal entity from a Member or Associated Candidate Country

· A ToK-IAP project has at least two legal entities (one industrial and one academic) from two Member or Associated States. If there are two participants, at least one must be from a Member State or an Associated Candidate Country; if there are three or more, at least three hosts in three different Member or Associated States, of which at least two must be from Member or Associated Candidate Countries, are requested. Such strategic research partnership projects can be coordinated either by the industrial or academic partner and can involve one or more partners from the other sector.

Q: What are the less-favoured regions of the Member States in the context of the Marie Curie Actions?

A: For the purpose of European research policy, less-favoured regions are regions eligible for Objective 1 of the EU Structural Funds. For further information please consult:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/objective1/regions_en.htm

Q: Does the European Commission have a list of potential ToK partner organisations?

A: The CORDIS website provides an on-line partner search tool:

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

Potential ToK proposers can also advertise their partnering needs by publishing their own on-line profile: <http://partners-service.cordis.lu/index.cfm?pos=2>

Q: In a ToK-IAP project, is it possible to present a proposal in which one of the partners acts as the coordinator of the partnership organising the exchange of researchers, or is it compulsory that all partners exchange researchers?

A: Normally, the proposal should show staff exchange in both directions. However, this is flexible and if an exchange in only one direction can be duly justified (for instance an SME might find it very difficult to second permanent staff members), this would be examined on a case by case basis by the Commission?

Eligible researchers

Q: At the time of submitting a proposal, do ToK project participants have to know which researchers they wish to appoint?

A: No; at the proposal stage the names of the fellows are not necessary and do not need to be included in the proposal.

Q: Who are the targeted researchers?

A: The ToK scheme is aimed at experienced researchers with at least four years of full-time research experience or a PhD. In addition, to ensure the European character of a ToK project, experienced researchers are required to undertake transnational mobility (i.e. move to another country) when taking up their appointment.

Q: What are the eligibility criteria regarding the nationality of the mobile researchers?

A: Researchers must be nationals of a state other than that of the host organisation. In addition, at the start of their fellowship/activity they may not have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in the country of their host organisation for more than 12 months in the three years immediately prior to the start date. Short stays such as holidays are not taken into account.

Q: Are there exceptions to the rule that a researcher can only be hosted in a country different from his/her nationality?

A: Yes, researchers will be considered as being eligible to benefit from a training or mobility action in their country of origin if they can provide evidence that they have resided legally and have had their principal activity (work, studies, etc.) in a third country for at least four of the last five years immediately prior to the start date. Additionally if the host is an international organisation (such as EMBL or CERN) then different rules may apply – please consult the Handbook.

Q: Can researchers from third countries take part in a ToK project?

A: Yes; experienced researchers who are nationals of third countries (outside the EU and Associate States) can be appointed within the ToK scheme as long as they do not represent more than 30% of the number of funded researcher-months. Note that the 30% limit applies to the person-months delivered by the ToK host as a whole over the duration of the project.

Q: How should vacancies for ToK projects be advertised?

A: Once the ToK contract has been signed, the research organisation(s) must ensure that job opportunities are advertised on the internet, in the scientific press, and through its usual means of advertising. When made available, these vacancies are published on the following CORDIS website <http://mc-opportunities.cordis.lu>. Applications should be made directly to the host institution rather than to the Commission.

Q: In a ToK-IAP project, can the industrial partner recruit new staff members who would be immediately seconded to the academic partner?

A: Yes. The researchers must have been active in the same sector for the previous 2 years, but not necessarily within the partner organisation. In principle, the industrial partner can recruit a researcher with at least 2 years of industrial experience then second that person to the academic partner.

Financial and contractual aspects

Q: How much funding can a ToK project receive?

A: The overall budget of a ToK project depends mainly on the number of participants and the amount of recruitment or exchange that can be provided to the researchers. As an indication, the funding might be up to €1 million.

Q: How can the funding be used?

A: The main part of the funding is for the benefit of the researchers who are recruited or seconded, including their living allowances, travel costs, etc. This is paid according to the rates defined by the Commission. The remainder of the budget goes towards research costs along with overheads and management-related expenses.

Q: Is there a model contract which can be used when preparing the agreement between the contractor and a fellow researcher?

A: No. The contractor should use a standard contract which respects national legislation. The only constraint imposed by the Commission is that the contract between the host and the fellow must respect the remuneration conditions of the general TOK contract.

Q: Is it possible to finance a kind of ‘kick-off’ workshop for all the partners involved in the project?

A: Yes, once the contract has entered into force, this is possible.

Project implementation

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Q: Is it possible to divide a full fellowship period into two or more periods?

A: The notion of split visits is acceptable as long as it is compatible with the project work programme and has been foreseen in the Annex I of the contract.

Q: In a ToK-DEV project, can the official legal entity send its experienced researchers to partner organisations located in one single country, or should the partner organisations be located in different countries?

A: The host organisation has the option of specifying partners to which it would like to second researchers in the original proposal. These partners must all be outside the host country but do not need to be in a single country. The partners should normally be within the EU or Associated States.

Q: What provisions are foreseen for researchers regarding confidentiality before embarking on a ToK project?

A: The arrangements between the contractor and the researcher during and after the project will have to be defined in the agreement that they sign when the researcher is appointed under the project. The arrangement will have to respect the intellectual property rights (IPR) provisions of the contract signed between the Commission and the consortium. 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).

Proposal preparation and submission
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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: In the case of ToK Industry-Academia scheme, is it necessary to have an agreement with the other partners of the proposal before the evaluation and, if not, when will the agreement be required?

A: There is no need to have an agreement at the proposal evaluation stage, but such an agreement between partners is strongly recommended before the contract enters into force.

Q: Should the potential fellows concerned by a ToK project be mentioned in the proposal?

A: No; at the proposal stage the names of the fellows are not necessary and do not need to be included in the proposal.

Q: In a ToK-DEV proposal, should the partner organisations also fill in A2 forms?

A: No.

Evaluation

Q: How are proposals evaluated? Who evaluates them? How many evaluators assess each proposal? How are evaluators selected? Does everybody have access to the guidelines for evaluators?

A: The Guidance Notes for Evaluators address these issues in detail. The general principles are set out in the Guidelines on Proposal Evaluation and Project Selection Procedures (the 'Evaluation Manual'). These documents are available on the Marie Curie website: http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/fp6/mariecurie-actions/pdf/guidance_evaluators.pdf and <http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/find-doc.htm#evalproc>

Q: How are applicants informed of the outcome of a proposal?

A: The preliminary evaluation results are usually published on the web within three or four months after the submission deadline, but they should be seen as purely informative before the final decision is made by the Commission. ToK preliminary evaluation results are available on both CORDIS: http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/mc_eur_fellowships.htm and on the Marie Curie website: http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/fp6/mariecurie-actions/opportunities/proposals_en.html. Applicants should read the introductory note carefully in order to understand the status of their proposal in the preliminary list.

Q: What happens after publication of the preliminary evaluation results?

A: The European Commission takes a formal decision about the final evaluation results and informs each proposer personally about the status of his/her proposal. Successful proposers are then invited to enter into negotiations.

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 ensure that they provide information on the main differences between the new proposal and the old one. The proposal's previous assessment mark will not be taken into account.