

Individual Fellowships Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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General Aspects¹

Q1: What is the main objective of Individual Fellowships (IF)?

A: The IF support individual researchers at postdoctoral level and beyond to work on a research project of their own design – all fields may be funded – that advances their careers. Mobility between countries is required in order to acquire new skills and experience, as well as to enhance the employability of the supported researcher in the future. Mobility between academic and non-academic sectors is also encouraged where this increases the impact of the fellowship.

Q2: What can the scale and duration of the project be?

A: The fellowship is for an individual researcher, and may last up to two years if it takes place only in a Member State or Associated Country (so-called European Fellowship). If there is initial mobility to another country (so-called Global Fellowship), followed by a mandatory return phase, the overall duration of the fellowship is up to three years.

Q3: What is an Associated country?

A: "Associated Country" means a country that is associated to Horizon 2020, not FP7. Each Framework Programme has its own association agreements, which are independent. For more information please see: http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/3cpart/h2020-hi-list-ac_en.pdf

Q4: What are the IF opportunities for academic organisations?

A: The fellowships enable organisations to host highly talented researchers, whose proposals are competitively peer-reviewed inter alia on the basis of research excellence. The researchers must have a certain amount of experience in the profession, as they must be in possession of a doctorate or have at least four years of fulltime research experience behind them (the latter experience starts after the degree entitling him/her to embark on a doctorate). Furthermore, they will bring experience from elsewhere in Europe or possibly beyond, as the IF require mobility to a host organisation in another country. Two schemes are possible: the European Fellowship (EF) and the Global Fellowship. In the first case the researcher moves to an EU Member State or Associated Country from another, or from elsewhere in the world. In the latter case the fellow moves to a third country² for between one and two year(s), followed by a year at a host organisation in a Member State or Associated Country.

An additional advantage to the host organisation is that the IF grant provides a complete financing package: up to two (EF) or up to three (GF) years of living, mobility and family allowances for the benefit of the individual researcher, as well as support to the host organisation for research costs, management and overheads.

¹ Please also refer to the IF [Guide for Applicants](#).

² Not an EU Member State or Horizon 2020 Associated Country

Q5: What are the IF opportunities for SMEs and companies?

A: SMEs and other companies can apply to host the fellowship and thus benefit from the services and valuable experience of a highly talented, fully funded researcher for at least a year. In addition, IFs, which are often carried out at academic institutions, may include secondments of a limited duration to other organisations in a Member State or Associated Country if this increases the impact of the project on European science, economies or society. For many research fields this may imply undertaking a secondment to a company, fully funded by the IF grant. Planned secondment(s) must be stated in the research proposal (in particular, the sector of the organisation, the timing and duration of the secondment) but the precise organisation can be chosen at a later stage.

Q6: Which countries can participate in IF 2014?

A: To apply for the grant, the researcher has to team up with a host institution established in a Member State or Associated Country.

Q7: What kind of project can be funded?

A: Individual researchers prepare proposals for funding in liaison with their planned host organisation. Proposals are judged *inter alia* on their research quality, the researcher's career prospects, and the support offered by the host organisation. The award criteria are detailed in full in the IF Guide for Applicants.

Q8: Can the researcher undertake a secondment in any third country during the outgoing phase of Global Fellowships?

A: In principle yes, however some entities from certain third countries are covered by EU restrictive measures (sanctions) in place and might not be eligible to participate in EU programmes. Please see the consolidated list of persons, groups and entities subject to EU financial sanctions, available at http://eeas.europa.eu/cfsp/sanctions/consol-list_en.htm.

Eligibility

Q9: Can researchers of any nationality participate in IF?

A: Researchers of any nationality can participate in IF. However, the Global Fellowships and the Reintegration Panel of the European Fellowships are restricted to nationals or long-term residents of Member States or Associated Countries. Long-term residents are defined as researchers who spent a period of full-time research activity of at least five consecutive years (without breaks in research) in one or more Member States or Associated Countries.

In addition, it should be noted that there are EU restrictive measures (sanctions) in place which can prohibit the participation of and/or provision of technical training to nationals and/or residents of certain countries in specific research fields. The beneficiaries are under an obligation to ensure compliance with these restrictive measures; an overview thereof can be found under http://eeas.europa.eu/cfsp/sanctions/docs/measures_en.pdf.

Q10: I have not yet obtained my PhD. How is the four years of full-time equivalent research experience calculated?

A: Only postgraduate research experience is relevant. Other professional activities are not taken into account, no matter when these took place.

Regarding from when to calculate the amount of experience, this is the "...date when a researcher obtained the degree which would formally entitle him or her to embark on a doctorate...". This may vary from country to country.

Q11: Is the Medical Doctor (MD) degree equivalent with PhD?

A: In the context of Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, Medical Doctor (MD) studies are not taken as equivalent to PhD studies. For MDs, the requirement of 4 years of full-time research experience will apply.

Q12: I have been living in country A (Member State) for approximately one year. Am I eligible for a European Fellowship there?

A: The application of the eligibility criteria is very strict including the compliance with the mobility rule. For example, if you had an employment contract lasting 12 months and one day with an institution based in country A during the last three years, you may not undertake a fellowship in country A.

Q13: I have already participated in a project funded under FP6 or FP7. Am I eligible to participate in the Individual Fellowship action funded under H2020?

A: Yes, if you fulfil the eligibility conditions for the Individual Fellowship. In case you have already benefited from another Marie Curie action, in your proposal you must explain the added value of your research activity under the new project.

Beneficiaries and Partner Organisations

Q14: Can a fellow have multiple supervisors within the same host organisation?

A: No. There should be only one supervisor in each host organisation, who is named in the table 'List of Participants' in Part B of the proposal. European Fellowships of course only have one host organisation, while Global Fellowships have two (one of them is in a third country).

The role of the supervisor(s) is to integrate the researcher properly within his/her organisation in order that all parties gain the maximum knowledge and skills from the fellowship. This includes ensuring that the foreseen training-through-research takes place, as well as providing support and guidance for the personal and professional development of the fellow.

Q15: What is the difference between International Organisations and International European Interest Organisations?

A: An International Organisation is defined³ as an inter-governmental organisation other than the European Community, which has legal personality under international public law. Any specialised agency set up by such international organisations is also considered an 'International Organisation'.

International European Interest Organisations on the other hand are defined⁴ as International Organisations, the majority of whose members are Member States or Associated Countries, and whose principal objective is to promote scientific and technological cooperation in Europe.

Q16: Must an International European Interest Organisation be located in a Member State or Associated Country?

A: No. As stated in the preceding answer, the H2020 Rules for Participation define International European Interest Organisations not on the basis of their location, but on their membership and principal objective.

Q17: In which IF can entities in Switzerland participate?

A: Swiss entities are not eligible for participation in a European Fellowship. However, Swiss organisations may host researchers during the outgoing phase of Global Fellowships, because they are located in a third country other than a Member State or Associated Country.

Please note that the situation for International European Interest Organisations located in Switzerland, such as CERN, is different. As stated in the preceding answer, the Rules for Participation define International European Interest Organisations not on the basis of their location, but on their membership and principal objective.

Project Implementation

Q18: Is the fellowship portable so that the fellow can change host organisation during the project?

A: The rules for the transfer of a grant to a new beneficiary are in the [IF Model Grant Agreement](#) article 56a. The key point is that the request to transfer can only be made by the beneficiary of the grant, meaning the host organisation located in a Member State or Associated Country.

³ [Unique Registration Facility User's Guide \(version 5 of 7 March 2014\)](#)

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/legal_basis/rules_participation/h2020-rules-participation_en.pdf

Q19: Can the researcher during an IF remain under his/her existing contract at the host institution?

A: If the fellow is already employed at the host institution at the start of the fellowship, an additional contract is not required provided that all of the conditions of the Grant Agreement are respected. These include in particular remuneration amounts, social security coverage, employment under a full-time regime and that the researcher must be fully dedicated to the action. Furthermore, please note in particular Article 32.1 of the Grant Agreement which requires the contract to state *inter alia* the start date and duration of the action.

Q20: Can EU funds be transferred to a third country, including the funding intended to cover indirect costs?

A: The EU contribution must be directly managed by the host organisation established in a Member State or Associated Country (beneficiary of the grant). However, in the case of the Global Fellowships and under the responsibility of the beneficiary, parts of the EU contribution can be transferred to the host organisation in a third country (partner organisation). It is highly encouraged to define these financial arrangements in a partnership agreement according to the needs of the project.

Arrangements between the beneficiary and the partner organisation in the third country are an internal matter for the partnership. However, during the audit the beneficiary will need to demonstrate that the researcher was working on the action and that the expected allowances (living, mobility and family allowances) were fully paid to him/her. Details on management or indirect costs will not be requested.

Proposal

Q21: Which scientific panel should I choose for my proposal? Does it have to be in the field of my highest degree diploma?

A: Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions have a bottom-up approach, meaning that proposals from all scientific areas (except those covered under [Annex I of the EURATOM Treaty](#)) can be funded. Your proposal should be submitted to one of the 8 main scientific areas defined in the IF Guide for Applicants in which your proposal best fits.

It is not compulsory to choose the same field as your PhD. For example, if you have a PhD in Chemistry and your proposal is mainly focusing on bio-chemistry you can nevertheless choose to submit your proposal in CHE or LIF. The List of Descriptors published on the IF call page of the Participant Portal, in which descriptors are associated to a scientific area, can help with your choice.

Q22: I think I am eligible for both Standard EF and CAR (or Standard EF and RI) IF. Which panel should I choose?

A: It is not possible to advise on such choice, and in either case the proposal will be reviewed by the most appropriate expert evaluators. However, the mobility rule applied to each of these options is different.

Q23: Will all sections of the proposal Part B be evaluated, or only those sections to which the page limit is applied (sections 1-4: Summary, Excellence, Impact, Implementation)?

A: All sections of the proposal form part of the evaluation. The 10-page limit is applied to sections 1 to 4 combined in order that, for example, researchers with more experience and hence a longer CV are not disadvantaged with reduced space to write sections 1 to 4.

Q24: The submission system indicates an error in the calculation of my research experience. But the dates inserted are correct. How can I submit my proposal now?

A: Please note that when filling the online application, it is possible that the system will indicate a discrepancy between your calculation and its own, based on the date when you obtained your university degree. This should not be considered as a factual error and does not prevent the submission of the application.

Q25: Why may a researcher not submit the proposal on his/her own?

A: This is because the legal responsibility lies with the host organisation in a Member State or Associated Country (future beneficiary) and only the supervisor, appointed by this organisation, can act on its behalf until the signature of the Grant Agreement. As such, only the supervisor can press the submit button and take any other actions in the name of the organisation (e.g. initiate the "review process" that for Horizon 2020 replaces the redress procedure) until the Grant Agreement is signed.

Q26: How are researchers compared during evaluations, in particular taking into account the different level of experience of researchers (e.g. a researcher with more years of experiences will have more publications etc.)?

A: As stated in the Guide for Applicants (page 39 – reproduced below), the assessment of the researcher is a key element of the Excellence award criterion. The text below shows how less experienced researchers are treated fairly:

2.4 Capacity of the researcher to reach and re-enforce a position of professional maturity in research

Please keep in mind that the fellowships will be awarded to the most talented researchers as shown by their ideas and their track record, where it is a fair indicator given their level of experience.

However, the CV may also be relevant for other aspects of the evaluation. For example, again under Excellence, the Guide for Applicants (page 38 – reproduced below) refers to host organisations possibly benefitting from the existing knowledge of the fellow:

Clarity and quality of transfer of knowledge/training for the development of the researcher in light of the research objectives

A two way transfer of knowledge should be described (please see Section 5.2 of this Guide):

- *The text must show how the Experienced Researcher will gain new knowledge from the hosting organisation(s) during the fellowship through training.*
- *These organisations may also benefit from the previous experience of the researcher. Outline the capacity for transferring the knowledge previously acquired by the researcher to the host organisation(s).*