

MSCA COFUND Webinar 10 March 2025 - Q&A session

In terms of project audits - will we have to demonstrate that the beneficiary contribution has been made?

The beneficiary must report the eligible unit costs and the declaration of costs for MSCA grants is almost completely automatised. Beneficiaries must indicate the number of implemented person-months for the recruited researchers/seconded staff members via the mobility declaration and the costs are then automatically calculated by the IT system.

Our university charges different tuition fees for UK versus international doctoral students. Is this allowable for COFUND doctoral programmes?

You should refer to your research organisation's usual practice as it relates to tuition fee waivers/deductions/claims. Doctoral candidates must be enrolled in a doctoral programme leading to the award of a doctoral degree in at least one EU Member State or HE associated country. Researchers also must be recruited under an employment contract or an equivalent direct contract (i.e. other contract with equivalent benefits and social security coverage) and costs for tuition fees cannot be deducted from the monthly allowance of the researcher.

Can Implementing and Associated Partners be considered as indirect beneficiaries?

The EC terminology does not use the term "indirect beneficiary". For this scheme it recognises 3 categories of participants: the beneficiary, implementing partners and associated partners.

The Beneficiary may fund, recruit, supervise, host or train the researchers, either on its own or in conjunction with Implementing and Associated Partners.

Implementing Partners are legal entities that can receive financial support from the Beneficiary and implement the MSCA COFUND Doctoral or Postdoctoral Programme. Implementing Partners are not signatories of the Grant Agreement. Therefore, they cannot claim costs of the programme directly from the European Research Executive Agency (REA) Implementing Partners can employ researchers.

Associated Partners are entities which participate in the action (e.g. providing training or secondments), but without the right to charge costs or claim contributions. They contribute to the implementation of the action, but do not sign the Grant Agreement. Associated Partners may not employ the researchers under the action. They can be established anywhere in the world and can be from any sectors. Any funding received is based on agreement with Beneficiary.

Implementing Partners and Associated Partners known at the proposal stage must be included under the participants section in the Part A of the proposal as well as in in Part B2 (section 5). If the Implementing and/or Associated Partners are not known at the time of application, these may be added during the lifetime of the project for both Doctoral and Postdoctoral schemes, with the REA project officer's prior approval.

Just wondering how you have Associated Partners involved/committed and marry that with researchers proposing their own projects that may involve other new Partners that aren't in the proposal?

Implementing and/or Associated Partners are not known at the time of application, these may be added during the lifetime of the project for both Doctoral and Postdoctoral schemes, with the REA project officer's prior approval. Existing Associated or Implementing Partners will play a role in determining the scope of the calls for researchers.

Can match funding be only in-kind and not financial?

The match funding must cover or contribute to the costs not covered by the COFUND allowance and must be sufficient to meet the research and training needs of the project. It is not specified what kind of match funding must be provided.

Can a single application request funding for both Doctoral Researchers and Post Doctoral Fellows?

This is not possible. When starting the application, you will need to choose between either a doctoral or a postdoctoral programme.

What exchange rate do we have to use to calculate what 4700 euros means in GBP?

Amounts to be paid to researchers or seconded staff members in other currencies must be converted into euro as follows:

- if a daily rate is published in the C series of the Official Journal of the European Union for the currency in question: amounts must be converted into euro at the average of the daily exchange rates published over the corresponding reporting period, as reported on the [ECB website](#)
- if no daily rate is published: amounts must be converted at the average of the monthly accounting rates over the reporting period, using the currency converter on the Commission's [InforEUR website](#).

For ease of implementation, monthly allowances for the recruited researchers can be calculated using a conservative exchange rate, provided a corrective payment is made to the researchers immediately after the end of the reporting period. This must be clearly explained in the employment contract, an equivalent direct contract, or a fixed-amount fellowship agreement. Please see the [MSCA Financial Guide](#).

Is there a limit on the number of UK host organisations that can apply?

There is no limit on the number of applications submitted by UK host organisations. The EU contribution is limited to EUR 10 million per beneficiary per call. If an applicant submits two or more successful applications totalling more than EUR 10 million within one call, the applicant will be required to decide which of these proposals to implement (see [MSCA 2023-25 Work Programme](#))

What is the expected institutional minimum contribution, i.e. how much is the Beneficiary expected to contribute to the budget at a minimum?

There is no minimum contribution. The only requirement is that the researchers are being paid the equivalent of the EC unit costs as a salary.

Must secondments be available for all postdocs, or could it be that only some of the postdocs undertake them, while others undertake short stays?

Secondments are optional, must be in line with the objectives and add significant value and impact to the researcher. It is therefore dependent on the individual project and not the programme.

Can you confirm what exactly the change is since the last call re: overhead costs? I believe that overheads can now be claimed from within the 4.7K euros/researcher, when previously they couldn't. Is that right?

The beneficiary has complete freedom in how to use the allowance. It can contribute to gross salary, which may or may not including mobility and family allowance, costs related to the training, research expenses, transfer of knowledge and networking activities of researchers, and management and indirect costs (overheads).

Can Associated Partners contribute funding, either in kind or materially?

Yes, Associated Partners can contribute in-kind and cash. This funding must not come from other EU funds.

Are PhD positions expected to be 3 years? Can they be 4 years?

The maximum duration of the action must be 60 months from the starting date set out in the Grant Agreement. The minimum duration of each fellowship (on the basis of full-time employment) must be 3 months and the fellow (doctoral candidate) must be employed for the duration of the researchers' individual fellowship. Within the 60 months, there is no upper limit for the length of the doctoral programme.

What exactly is meant by an "outgoing" phase - a period outside the EU/associated countries?

On Postdoctoral Programmes researchers may pursue secondments to Associated Partners in Third Countries; this is referred to as the 'outgoing phase'.