



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

**Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions
Doctoral Networks (DNs) 2022**

**DNs Coordinators' Information Day
8 & 9 November 2023**



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GENERAL INFORMATION

- The Coordinators' Information Day presentations are stored in the [DN 2022 INFO DAY LIBRARY](#).
- They will remain available for the whole framework programme.
- Pre-recorded presentations are related to project implementation topics: What's new, Best practices, Recruitment, Reporting, Finance, Audit, Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation, Open Science, Grant Agreement Obligations and Industrial Doctorates /Joint Doctorates specificities¹.
- The presentation of the results of the newly published and peer-reviewed [study](#) conducted by REA, in collaboration with DG EAC, on the innovation aspects of the Innovative Training Networks under Horizon 2020 can also be consulted as well as the presentation on the [MSCA Green Charter](#).
- The presentations of the plenary session of 9 November, encompassing presentations on the advantages of fostering networking and synergies, successful examples of implemented synergies in ITN/DN projects at various levels, possible synergies with EIT and Erasmus+, along with insights into the new scheme implemented by the EIC, Next Generation Innovation Talents are also available together with the one of the MSCA Project Managers Working Group.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

- In case you cannot find the question you have asked during the event, please contact your project officer;
- Questions not related to the event have not been answered;
- For questions related to the proposal submission and evaluation, please refer to the [Call Info Day for DN2023](#) and to the relevant Work programmes & Guide for Applicants. An Information Day will be organised in June 2024 for the call DN2024.
- Personal questions on career and training opportunities have not been answered.
- The list of DN2022 projects has been published in the [DN 2022 INFO DAY LIBRARY](#).
- Only answers to questions not answered live during the plenary session of 9 November have been provided.

¹ Please note that the hyperlinks in the videos cannot be used. They are only active in the pdf presentations.



MSCA DN2022 - Q&A SESSION ON PROJECT MANAGEMENT ISSUES

A. RECRUITMENT & DOCTORAL CANDIDATES

Q1. Is it possible that doctoral candidates (DCs) participate in the network at the end of their qualification? E.g., a doctoral candidate is recruited for 3 years and will defend her/his thesis within the first year of recruitment.

If the PhD is obtained just after the recruitment, the fellow would be eligible (since the rule states that supported researchers are doctoral candidates i.e., not already in possession of a doctoral degree at the date of the recruitment). Nevertheless, this recruitment would go against the spirit of the action. The idea of the programme and the spirit of the action is to support doctoral candidates and not postdoctoral researchers.

Q2. Can a Doctoral Candidate (DC) be hired by a company branch located in Germany, but live & work in another EU branch of the company which cannot directly hire him due to legislation?

It is possible for a DC recruited by a company located in Germany to work in another EU branch of the company. In this particular situation, the department in which the research is carried out will need to be changed in SyGMA via an amendment. The country correction coefficient (CCC) will need to be changed and reflect the country in which the branch of the company is located. This might lead to a reduction of the maximum grant amount if the CCC of the country in which the branch is located is higher than the one of Germany. The project officer should be consulted, and further guidance will be provided.

Q3. Is there an 'IT How to' or other guidance for Doctoral Candidates (DCs) on how to create a Person Profile? A lot of DCs are struggling to get this done.

Guidance is available in the Funding and tender opportunities website, in the IT How To, under [My Person profile](#).

Q4. What happens if a Doctoral Candidate (DC) is enrolled in a PhD and afterwards fails the probation period?

In the majority of the cases, DCs are recruited under a MSCA contract before being enrolled in a PhD. It may indeed happen that their enrolment is refused by the university board or that they fail the probation period. Given the fact that a DC needs to be enrolled in a doctoral programme in order to continue being a fellow and to continue receiving MSCA funding (as stipulated in the Work Programme), the MSCA contract with the fellow will need to be terminated. Beneficiaries are recommended to add a clause in their DN employment contracts



which mentions the mandatory enrolment in a PhD and the consequences should this clause not be respected.

Q5. Gross salary can be difficult to determine. Is it sufficient to say 'gross salary is (3400*CC), minus a deduction of compulsory employer social contributions' in the vacancy notice on EURAXESS?

As stated in the Work programme 2021-2022, the vacancy notice (to be widely advertised internationally, including on the EURAXESS website) must include the gross salary (not including employer's social contributions) offered to the researcher. Therefore, it is recommended to liaise with HR in order to define the gross salary and properly advertise it.

Q6. With regard to the vacancy notice on EURAXESS, the requirements change in the Work programme 2023-2024. It is stated that “the vacancy notice (to be widely advertised internationally, including on the EURAXESS website) must mention if the published rates include all employer and employee's taxes and contributions. If possible, the gross salary (net salary + employee's taxes and contributions) should be published”. Are we still obliged to insert the salary indication in the vacancy notice for DN2022 projects? And what could be the consequences if this is not done (properly)?

The flexibility granted in the Work programme 2023-2024 is not applicable to DN2022. As stated in the Work programme 2021-2022, the vacancy notice (to be widely advertised internationally, including on the EURAXESS website) must include the gross salary (not including employer's social contributions) offered to the researcher. Therefore, it is not possible to deviate. If this obligation is not complied with, the granting authority will first ask you to add a corrigendum in the vacancy notice. Nevertheless, please bear in mind that the proper advertisement of the position is also an obligation under Article 18 of the grant agreement and in case of non-compliance, the grant may be reduced (see Article 28). Such a breach may also lead to other measures described in Chapter 5.

Q7. Are we allowed to exclude candidates from high-risk countries for certain positions if the project is subject to export control regulations (strategic goods)? And are we allowed to include that in the vacancy text?

You can find the link to all countries where EU sanctions or restriction measures apply <https://sanctionsmap.eu/#/main>. All the related regulations and documents are also available in the Official Journal of the European Union, that could guide you in understanding in which area/research domain you might be affected. You can recruit fellows from anywhere in the world, but for specific research domains you may need to double check with your national authorities in case some EU sanctions apply in the country of origin. In case of any specific questions, I recommend you to contact your project officer for any further guidance.

Please also check the guidance provided in the document [Tackling R&I foreign interference](#).



Q8. Our university cannot formally employ PhD students. They receive a scholarship/fellowship and are enrolled in the PhD programme as a student. Is this allowed? And if so, how does this affect the mobility declaration and the grant amount?

As stipulated in Article 6 of the grant agreement, “recruited researchers should be recruited under an employment contract (or other direct contract with equivalent benefits, including social security coverage) or — if not otherwise possible under national law — under a fixed amount fellowship agreement with minimum social security coverage, including during periods of secondment”. When an employment contract or an equivalent direct contract cannot be provided because of the national legislation (or the equivalent internal rules of an organisation), beneficiaries may, exceptionally, and subject to the granting authority’s prior agreement, offer a fixed-amount fellowship with minimum social security coverage, including:

- sickness, parental and invalidity benefits and
- benefits for accidents at work and occupational diseases.

In this case, the living allowance will be reduced by 50%. The social security coverage must be guaranteed for the entire recruitment of the researchers, including during their secondments, if any.

We therefore recommend that you to contact your project officer and provide more details on the type of contract your institution is allowed to give, and you will receive additional support. If the type of contract offered to the fellow is acceptable and complies with the above conditions, the mobility declaration will be updated accordingly.

Q9. What special rules (mobility declaration, mobility rule, evaluation questionnaire etc.) apply to fellows who are employed by associated partners using their own funding (e.g., from UK or Switzerland)?

Associated partners recruiting with their own funds are not subject to the Doctoral Networks specific rules even though the granting authority recommends that the work of the fellows is described in Annex 1 of the grant agreement and that they are integrated as much as possible in the MSCA project. But since they have been recruited with non-EU funding, no mobility declaration needs to be provided, fellows do not need to comply with the mobility rule and no evaluation questionnaire should be submitted by them.

Q10. How to determine if Doctoral Candidates (DCs) receive other incomes related to their research? What does “other incomes” specifically refer to? e.g., if somebody is an entrepreneur and are hired by the project?

As stipulated in Article 6 of the grant agreement, recruited researchers should “be employed full-time, unless the granting authority has approved a part-time employment for personal or family reasons”. Article 18 (see Specific rules for MSCA actions), also states that recruited researchers should not receive “for activities carried out in the frame of the action, other incomes than those received from the beneficiary or other entities mentioned in Annex 1)”. Therefore, an entrepreneur, still in activity, cannot be recruited as a doctoral candidate as part-time is not allowed for professional reasons and the fellow should exclusively work for the



action, the remuneration being covered by the project itself and the entities mentioned in Annex 1.

Q11. Assuming Doctoral Candidates (DCs) have a full-time contract, how to determine if DCs receive other incomes not related to their research?

See answer to question 10 (Q10).

Q12. A partner has branches in two countries (Italy and Greece), using the same PIC but the two branches have a different VAT number. What are the mobility constraints e.g., is it possible for an Italian resident to be hosted in the Greek branch?

Branches are not regarded as legal entities as they do not have an independent legal personality distinct from that of their mother-company. The fact that they are registered in national official registers is not sufficient. It will therefore be the mother-company that will be considered as the legal entity. The same applies to branches established in a different country.

Usually, entities set-up within — or under — a parent organisation (such as departments/centres/offices) and not provided with their own legal personality (despite having their administration or budgetary autonomy, VAT number/fiscal code/number of registration) cannot be regarded as a legal entity and are considered as belonging to their parent-organisation.

Therefore, we would recommend you for this particular question, to contact your project officer. We would need to have more details to verify whether it is the right entity that participates in the project and recruits the fellow. The legal entity recruiting will need to ensure that the recruited fellow (who will need to be selected via an open, transparent, merit-based, impartial, and equitable recruitment procedure) complies with the mobility rule at the time of recruitment both in Italy and Greece. Thus, the recruited fellow should not have resided or carried out his main activity (work, studies, etc.) in Italy and in Greece for more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately before the recruitment date.

Q13. Regarding multiple recruitments in a DN-ID project (Industrial Doctorate): do we need a new Mobility Declaration (MD) for each recruitment period? Does the mobility rule also apply to the 2nd recruiting period - as the MD data under recruitment include the last countries of activity?

In case of multiple recruitments by different beneficiaries, a Mobility Declaration needs to be submitted by each beneficiary (for the respective recruitment period) as the financial statements are automated, based on the researcher-months encoded by the beneficiaries in the mobility declarations.

As for the mobility rule, it only applies to the first recruitment of a researcher under the action.

Q14. How can Doctoral Candidates (DCs) be recruited for a min. of 3 months but need to be enrolled in a PhD programme (3+ years)? Is this meant for a replacement if a DC



quits? It may be hard finding such a person without funds for them to then complete their PhD.

The duration of each fellowship (on the basis of full-time employment) is minimum 3 and maximum 36 months and this is a cost eligibility condition (i.e., the costs of a fellow recruited for only 2 months would not be eligible).

DCs should be recruited ideally for the maximum duration (36 months); shorter duration of minimum 3 months can indeed be used in case of resignations, drop-offs, etc. Those cases should nevertheless be discussed beforehand with REA's project officer. The added value for the fellow and the project will need to be assessed.

REA is aware that in several countries the PhD duration is more than 3 years and that the MSCA funding is limited to 3 years. Therefore, REA very much encourages beneficiaries to support the DCs and secure additional funding to cover their 4th year.

Q15. Which other portal - besides EURAXESS - are suggested to use for publishing the vacancies to reach a wider public?

Publishing vacancies in the EURAXESS job portal is a contractual obligation but vacancies can also be advertised more widely and internationally. Universities' websites but also the Nature jobs or EMBO website are interesting platforms for publishing. Depending on the scientific domain, other types of platforms can also be used.

Q16. What is a realistic time between vacancy advertisement and actual deadline for decision given to the applicants?

This is up to each beneficiary to establish a realistic timeframe as the selection and recruitment fall under the beneficiaries' responsibilities. Nevertheless, the timeframe should allow all recruited researchers to benefit from a 36 months contract.

Q17. What could be valid reasons for which a fellow can require Part-time recruitment?

The usual practice is for doctoral candidates to be employed full-time unless the granting authority has approved a part-time employment for personal or family reasons. Part-time for professional reasons is not allowed in Doctoral Networks. Please always contact your project officer in such cases to discuss the request for part-time as the approval of REA is required beforehand.

Q18. If a Doctoral Candidate (DC) has his/her own startup company while enrolled in the program, how can this aspect be merged with working for the Doctoral Network project? Considering that one of the eligibility criteria is that the DC does not have any other income?

As stipulated in Article 6 of the grant agreement, recruited researchers should "be employed full-time, unless the granting authority has approved a part-time employment for personal or family reasons". Article 18 (see Specific rules for MSCA actions), also states that recruited researchers should not receive "for activities carried out in the frame of the action, other



incomes than those received from the beneficiary or other entities mentioned in Annex 1)". Therefore, a DC, still in activity and owning/still working in his/her start-up, cannot be recruited as a doctoral candidate as part-time is not allowed for professional reasons and the fellow should exclusively work for the action, the remuneration being covered by the project itself and the entities mentioned in Annex 1.

Q19. Do secondments need to be reported only once they have taken place? (Or before or during?)

Secondments should only be reported once they have taken place. It is imperative that all secondments are reported before the end of the project to allow the granting authority to verify the compliance of the secondment rule for Doctoral Network projects, which states that secondments are eligible for up to one third of the actual months spent implementing the research training activities under the action. This limitation does not apply in the case of Industrial Doctorates and Joint Doctorates.

Q20. Let's assume a candidate hasn't been living in the country of recruitment for more than 12 months in the previous 36 months, but he/she has the nationality of that country. Can he/she still be recruited?

If the mobility rule is respected and despite the fact that the candidate has the nationality of the country of the recruiting beneficiary, the fellow can be recruited.

Q21. What is exactly meant by 'working full-time on the project'? Do PhD students have to work full-time (full time employment contract), or can they be hired with a part-time contract but have to work dedicated on the project?

The usual practice is for doctoral candidates to be employed full-time unless the granting authority has approved a part-time employment for personal or family reasons. Part-time for professional reasons is not allowed in Doctoral Networks. Doctoral Candidates should also be recruited under an employment contract (or other direct contract with equivalent benefits, including social security coverage) or — if not otherwise possible under national law — under a fixed amount fellowship agreement with minimum social security coverage, including during periods of secondment. In this latter case, the living allowance will be halved, and the beneficiary must ensure that the doctoral candidate enjoys minimum social security coverage including sickness, parental and invalidity benefits, and benefits for accidents at work and occupational diseases.

Q22. Associated Partners (for example, from UK or Switzerland) will not receive any budget from the EU. Do they have to respect the exact same rules than the Partners from the EU? How much their rules can differ from the MSCA rules?

See answer to question 9 (Q9).



Q23. Experience from the DN2021 ongoing projects has shown that many have problems with recruiting their doctoral candidates within the first 12 months of the project. Is the EU open to extend projects facing significant issues?

An assessment on a case-by-case base will need to be carried out. Therefore, please contact your project officer in case you experience delays in recruitment. Please also put in place relevant contingency measures, if not already done.

Q24. What kind of evidence should we collect concerning a) residence of the Doctoral Candidate (DC) before joining the project b) proof that the DC lives in the country of the host organisation during their recruitment?

In case of audit, and to check the respect of the mobility rule, a non-exhaustive list of documents can be provided, i.e., ID card or a residence permit, registration documents, lease agreement, bills, etc.

Once the fellow is recruited, you will need to prove that the DC is hosted at the premises of the recruiting beneficiary. In case of audit, it is important to have supporting documentation to justify the eligibility of the person-months claimed. Therefore, you need to keep the contractual documentation, the payroll records, access rights, lab books or other evidence, in order to substantiate the number of months spent by the doctoral candidate (PhD students) on the action. For the doctoral candidates (DCs), timesheets can be used but they are not mandatory. Auditors will check all kind of evidence that the DC worked exclusively and full-time (or part-time, if agreed by the REA) on the project within the beneficiary's premises or the premises of an associated partner during a secondment. Examples of evidence that can be provided are lab books, attendance list, conference abstract, library records, travel expenses, reports to supervisor, meeting minutes, e-mail exchanges and, other open sources (internet) which show that the researcher showed that the DC worked on the action tasks.

With regard to the enrolment, proof of the student registration, access to student services (library, computing, etc.), teaching, supervision, examination and graduation can be used.

Q25. How do the international organizations (IO) count for the mobility rule? Can a Doctoral Candidate (DC) be recruited by an IO based in the same country where they did their Master's?

Recruited researchers can be of any nationality and must comply with the following mobility rule: they must not have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in the country of the recruiting beneficiary for more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately before their recruitment date.

For 'International European Research Organisations' (IERO), 'international organisations', or entities created under Union law, the researchers must not have spent more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately before their recruitment in the same appointing organisation.

Q26. Given the current situation, does the EU have any advice on hiring Doctoral Candidates (or publishing vacancies) if the hiring Beneficiary is based in Israel?



In line with its efforts to support MSCA beneficiaries and researchers based in Israel in this force majeure situation, REA will consider adopting a flexible approach whenever possible, based on a case-by-case analysis. Therefore, please contact your project officer who will assess the situation and provide you with possible flexibility measures (e.g., teleworking from the country of origin of a fellow/ teleworking from another beneficiary, modification of secondment plans to allow the fellow to start with a secondment, possible extension of the project duration, flexibility of the mobility rule, etc.).

Q27. An Industrial Doctorate with 4 academic beneficiaries and 6 industrial ones. What is best practice: to offer one single contract for the Doctoral Candidate with the academic beneficiary as they will grant the PhD, or two separate contracts: one with academic, and one with the industrial partner?

The recruitment by beneficiaries should have already been decided at proposal stage and evaluated by the experts. During the project implementation, changes in the recruitment are possible but they should be discussed beforehand with REA and approved by the project officer. They also might affect the maximum grant amount as the location of the premises of the recruiting beneficiary will have an influence on the fellow's salary in view of the different country correction coefficients.

At proposal stage, multiple recruitments can be foreseen but it is up to the consortium to decide what is best for the project, in line with national requirements as well as the DN/ID/JD specific rules.

Q28. What happens if it later turns out that a Doctoral Candidate (DC) has actually not moved to the secondment location but stayed at its home country and only logged into the company remotely and travelled to the company from time to time.

As stated under Article 18 of the grant agreement and more specifically in the specific rules for MSCA actions, fellows need to be hosted at the premises of the recruiting beneficiary or at the premises of other participants in the action (i.e., during secondments). If a beneficiary breaches any of its obligations under this Article, the grant may be reduced (see Article 28). Such a breach may also lead to other measures described in Chapter 5.

Q29. If a Doctoral Candidate (DC) fails the probation period or terminate their contract, can we re-open the call and hire another person?

In the majority of the cases, DCs are recruited under a MSCA contract before being enrolled in a PhD. It may indeed happen that their enrolment is refused by the university board or that they fail the probation period. Given the fact that a DC needs to be enrolled in a doctoral programme in order to continue being a fellow and to continue receiving MSCA funding (as stipulated in the Work Programme), the MSCA contract with the fellow will need to be terminated. Beneficiaries are recommended to add a clause in their DN employment contracts which mentions the mandatory enrolment in a PhD and the consequences should this clause not be respected.



Therefore, if there are still enough PMs, it is indeed possible to re-open the call and recruit another fellow. Please contact your project office in such cases.

Q30. Can you please explain the definition of "employing associated partners"? They are mentioned in the DESCAs model of the Consortium Agreement. I thought that Associated Partners in Doctoral Networks cannot employ.

Associated partners are organisations that participate in the implementation of MSCA projects, but without being signatories of the Grant Agreement.

They do not recruit researchers and they may not charge unit contributions to the action. But associated partners can implement action tasks described in Annex 1 of the grant agreement, such as hosting and training researchers.

The definition “employing associated partners” is mentioned in the DESCAs model of the Consortium Agreement. This model is provided by an entity independent from the European Commission and most probably the definition comes from the fact that UK and Swiss associated partners are recruiting (and thus employing) with their own funds.

Q31. If the academic supervisor changes institution, should the Doctoral Candidate change the PhD school where he/she is registered to follow the supervisor?

While it would be possible, it is not required. The case should be assessed by the consortium, the recruiting beneficiary and the fellow and discussed beforehand with the REA project officer.

Q32. Are there example of Doctoral Candidate (DC) contracts / templates available, e.g., at the NCPs (National Contact Points)?

There is no template provided by the granting authority as contracts need to comply with the national regulations of the recruiting institution, as well as with its internal rules. In addition to be compliant with those regulations, the contract should also specify (as stated under Article 18 of the grant agreement and the MSCA specific rules):

- the name of the supervisor(s) for the research training activities
- the starting date and duration of the research training activities
- the monthly support for the researcher under this Agreement (in euro and, if relevant, in the currency in which the remuneration is paid)
- the obligation of the researcher to work exclusively for the action, unless part-time for professional reasons is allowed and has been approved (and not to receive, for activities carried out in the frame of the action, other incomes than those received from the beneficiary or other entities mentioned in Annex 1)
- the working pattern of the researcher
- the arrangements related to the intellectual property rights (during implementation of the action and afterwards), in particular full access — on a royalty-free basis — for the researcher to background and results needed for their activities under the action



- the obligation of the researcher to inform as soon as possible about events or circumstances likely to affect the implementation of the action or the compliance with requirements under the Agreement (see Article 19)
- the obligation of the researcher to maintain confidentiality (see Article 13)
- the obligation of the researcher to ensure the visibility of EU funding in communications or publications and in applications for the protection of results (see Articles 17)

Further guidance can be obtained directly from your [National Contact Point](#) (NCP).

Q33. How should Doctoral Candidates (DCs) prove that at the moment of application to an MSCA position they have less than 4 years prior research experience? What is intended for research experience, does it also involve work in industry not related to research?

This rule was applicable to Innovative Training Networks under H2020. Under Horizon Europe and more specifically for Doctoral Networks, there is no longer such an obligation. Supported researchers must be doctoral candidates, i.e., not already in possession of a doctoral degree at the date of the recruitment. Researchers who have successfully defended their doctoral thesis but who have not yet formally been awarded the doctoral degree will not be considered eligible.

Q34. During recruitment is it reasonable to have different interview panels for Doctoral Candidates in different thematic areas and is it necessary that the coordinator sits on all these interview panels, or can they delegate this task to a partner?

As stated under Article 18 of the grant agreement and more specifically in the specific rules for MSCA actions, beneficiaries should recruit the researchers, following an open, transparent, merit-based, impartial, and equitable recruitment procedure, on the basis of:

- their scientific skills and the relevance of their research experience
- the impact of the proposed training on the researcher's career
- a fair gender representation (by promoting genuine equal access opportunities throughout the recruitment process)

The selection committees must bring together diverse expertise, have an adequate gender balance, and include members from different countries and with relevant experience to assess the candidates. In addition, beneficiaries need to ensure that no conflict of interest exists in or arises from the recruitment and that the principles set out in the Commission Recommendation on the [European Charter for Researchers](#) and the [Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers](#) are respected.

If the above guidelines are respected, it is up to the consortium to decide on the best recruitment process. Advice on the matter can also be found in the Best practices [presentation](#). There is no obligation for the coordinator to sit in the different thematic panels, should this be the recruitment strategy chosen by the consortium.



Q35. If a Doctoral Candidate (DC) leaves after ~1 year. What normally happens next? A new recruitment (with extra money needed for the extra contract time)? Or do some beneficiaries simply stop that part of the project (and return some money to EU)?

In case of a resignation, a new DC can be recruited following an open, fair, transparent, and merit-based recruitment process. The new fellow will need to be enrolled in a doctoral programme and can be recruited for the remaining person-months available (e.g., if the fellow left after 12 months, there will be maximum 24 person-months available for the newly recruited fellow). In addition, the consortium will need to put in place all the necessary measures to ensure the good continuation of the project. If such a scenario occurs, please contact your project officer.

Q36. For Joint doctorate, in case institution A has a PhD program in 3 years and institution B has a PhD program in 4 years. Is it possible for both of them to ask for a 48months contribution? or institution A should ask for 36months?

In DN2022, the fellowship duration is maximum 36 months. It is not possible for any of the institutions to request 48PMs. Additional PMs to cover the 4th year of PhD cannot be granted. Therefore, REA very much encourages beneficiaries to support the Doctoral Candidates and secure additional funding to cover their 4th year through alternative sources of funding.

As of DN2023, for Joint Doctorates, the fellowship duration has been increased to 48PM, but this is not applicable to DN2022.

Q37. Can Doctoral Candidates (DCs) do demonstration/teaching within the University that they get paid for? i.e., for 4 h per week during semester.

Complementary skills training (e.g., teaching activity as part of the research training) is possible, but must NOT jeopardise the research training activities and must be described in Annex 1 of the grant agreement. In addition, doctoral candidates should by default be employed full-time, unless the granting authority has approved a part-time employment for personal or family reasons. Finally, fellows should not receive any other income for activities carried out in the framework of the action. Therefore, teaching activities are allowed if (1) they do not jeopardize the research training activities, (2) are mentioned in Annex 1, and (3) are not remunerated.

Q38. Is it possible for a Doctoral Candidate to also teach at the University (as this is part of their training)? Is it allowed to provide an additional salary for this?

See answer to question 37 (Q37).

Q39. If a Doctoral Candidate (DC) leaves after 6-12 months, can we go back to the original recruitment panel and offer to number 2 on the panel? Also, if a new second recruitment run is needed does the mobility rule for Doctoral Candidates still apply?

If during the original recruitment phase, a reserve list was established, it is possible to offer the position to the reserve list candidate who will need to be eligible and comply with the mobility



rule at the time of recruitment. If a second recruitment phase is needed, the recruitment will need to be open, transparent, merit based, impartial and equitable and the newly recruited fellow will need to comply with the mobility rule.

Q40. For UK based Associated partners (Academic, funded by UK sources) participating in ID-DN (Industrial Doctorate) do fellows have to spend half of their time in an Industrial partner?

See answer to question 9 (Q9). In addition, in the case of Industrial Doctorates, fellows recruited by the UK using their own funds will not be subject to the mandatory exposure to the non-academic sector for 50% of their fellowship duration.

Q41. What if the Doctoral Candidate becomes pregnant in the middle of the project and is unable to do the work in the laboratory?

If the situation occurs, please contact your project officer. The situation will need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis, depending on when the maternity has occurred, how it has affected the fellow's project and the project in general, and ad-hoc measures will need to be implemented and a contingency plan put in place.

Q42. Our university has a minimum requirement of four-year employment for PhD to even accept a PhD candidate. How is that taken into regards by the EU since the maximum time for the grant is 36 months?

REA is aware that in several countries the PhD duration is more than 3 years and that the MSCA funding is limited to 3 years. Therefore, the REA very much encourages beneficiaries to support the DCs and secure additional funding to cover their 4th year.

Q43. Is there a deadline to enrol a Doctoral Candidate in a PhD program? That is, how much time can pass between the deadline of the Call and the PhD program enrolment?

Doctoral Candidates are usually recruited during the first year of the project. REA is aware that the process and requirements for enrolling in a PhD program can vary significantly depending on the institution and each enrolment has its own timeline. Therefore, enrolment should be done as soon as possible and in line with the timeline and requirements of the institution awarding the PhD.

Q44. If a candidate is already enrolled in a PhD programme but on notice period as he would like to change the PhD project, would this candidate still be eligible?

In Doctoral Networks, supported researchers must be doctoral candidates, i.e., not already in possession of a doctoral degree at the date of the recruitment. Researchers who have successfully defended their doctoral thesis but who have not yet formally been awarded the doctoral degree will not be considered eligible. Therefore, if the candidate complies with the above requirements, he would be eligible.



Q45. Is there any formal requirement for gender balance in the recruitment of the Doctoral Candidates (DCs), e.g., should it be 50%+ of female DCs?

According to Article 14 of the grant agreement, “the beneficiaries must take all measures to promote equal opportunities between men and women in the implementation of the action and, where applicable, in line with the gender equality plan. They must aim, to the extent possible, for a gender balance at all levels of personnel assigned to the action, including at supervisory and managerial level”. But there is no precise indication, nor percentages.

Q46. If a Beneficiary does not issue PhD certificates, does the cooperating university (which will award them) have to be included in the project as associated partner (if so, via an amendment)?

Indeed. Should none of the beneficiary be entitled to deliver a PhD, a university or a consortium/grouping of academic/research institutions entitled to award a doctoral degree must be added to the project as an associated partner or an associated partner linked to a beneficiary. If the associated partner is not already in the consortium, it should be added via an amendment.

Q47. Can we change the supervisor or cosupervisor for a Doctoral Candidate within the same institution?

Changes in the supervision arrangements are allowed but they need to be justified. Therefore, please consult your project officer to discuss the change.

Q48. There is a progress report due at M12. When will the finalized template be available?

The progress report [template](#) is available and can be downloaded from the Funding & tender opportunities portal.

Q49. Which actions can be taken if there is a breach of the aspects addressed in the REA Guidelines for Supervision?

The REA Supervision Guidelines have no legal value as they are guidelines. Nevertheless, REA recommends that those guidelines are followed, and that Doctoral Candidates are properly supervised. The MSCA promote effective supervision, which contribute to creating a supportive environment for the researchers to conduct their work. In line with the principles set out in the Charter and Code, MSCA beneficiaries must ensure adequately supervision or mentoring and appropriate career guidance. Supervision is one of the crucial elements of successful research. Guiding, supporting, directing, advising, and mentoring are key factors for a researcher to pursue his/her career path. In this context, all MSCA-funded projects are encouraged to follow the recommendations outlined in the MSCA Guidelines for supervision.

Q50. Can we enrol students having a PhD degree in another field?



In Doctoral Networks, supported researchers must be doctoral candidates, i.e., not already in possession of a doctoral degree at the date of the recruitment. Researchers who have successfully defended their doctoral thesis but who have not yet formally been awarded the doctoral degree will not be considered eligible. Researcher who has a PhD in another field are also not eligible.

Q51. Can we recruit a Medical doctor (MD)?

Medical doctor degrees corresponding to basic medical training as defined in Annex V of Directive 2005/36/EC will not be considered a doctoral degree. Therefore, medical doctors can be considered as doctoral candidates and can be recruited.

Q52. For ID (Industrial Doctorates), does the mobility recruitment rule apply only for the first recruitment, or for all recruitments?

The mobility rule only applies to the first recruitment, whatever the implementation mode (Doctoral Networks, Industrial Doctorates, or Joint Doctorates).

Q53. How much time do the Doctoral Candidates have to defend their thesis after the end of the project?

There are no time limits for the doctoral candidates (DCs) to defend their thesis during or after the end of the project. The only obligation during the duration of the project is for DCs to be enrolled in a doctoral programme leading to the award of a doctoral degree in at least one EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country, and for Joint Doctorates in at least two. If requested by the Agency, the beneficiary must be able to provide proof that the researcher actually received (or failed the examination for) the doctoral degree.

Q54. Is part-time employment for professional reasons permitted?

The usual practice is for doctoral candidates to be employed full-time unless REA agrees to part-time. Such a request is limited to personal or family reasons. Part-time for professional is not allowed in Doctoral Networks. Please always contact your project officer in such cases to discuss the request for part-time.

Q55. In order to comply with the mobility rule, when we talk about recruitment, which specific date is meant?

The mobility rule states that doctoral candidates must not have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in the country of the recruiting beneficiary for more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately before the recruitment date. Recruitment date means the first day of the employment of the researcher for the purposes of the action.

Q56. Are there specific rules to follow for the recruitment workshop? For example, number of members for each evaluator panel?



As stated under Article 18 of the grant agreement and more specifically in the specific rules for MSCA actions, beneficiaries should recruit the researchers, following an open, transparent, merit-based, impartial, and equitable recruitment procedure, on the basis of:

- their scientific skills and the relevance of their research experience
- the impact of the proposed training on the researcher's career
- a fair gender representation (by promoting genuine equal access opportunities throughout the recruitment process)

The selection committees must bring together diverse expertise, have an adequate gender balance, and include members from different countries and with relevant experience to assess the candidates. In addition, beneficiaries need to ensure that no conflict of interest exists in or arises from the recruitment. The principles set out in the Commission Recommendation on the [European Charter for Researchers](#) and the [Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers](#) should be respected.

If the above guidelines are respected, it is up to the consortium to decide on the best recruitment process. Advice on the matter can also be found in the Best practices [presentation](#). There is no specific requirement on the number of members for each evaluator panel.

Q57. As all recruited Doctoral Candidates (DCs) are registered in the Portal, including the end date of their assignment, will they get automatic reminders to complete the obligatory questionnaires?

Doctoral Candidates will not get an automatic reminder to complete the questionnaires. It is the beneficiaries' responsibility to remind fellows of this obligation.

As stated in Annex 5 of the MSCA grant agreement, each beneficiary must inform the researchers about “the obligation of the researchers to complete and submit — at the end of the research training activities — the evaluation questionnaire and — two years later — follow-up questionnaire provided by the granting authority”.

The Evaluation Questionnaire can be accessed [here](#) and the Follow-up Questionnaire can be accessed [here](#). Fellows will need to enter the project related information, including the project number and acronym. Please note that the obligation to submit the questionnaire will be checked by our services at the latest in the moment of the final payment.

Q58. In the job offers (e.g., on Euraxess) is it enough to write “salary will follow the rates determined by the EU for MSCA DN Actions” or similar, instead of citing a concrete amount for the gross salary?

It is not sufficient. As stated in the Work programme 2021-2022, the vacancy notice (to be widely advertised internationally, including on the EURAXESS website) must include the gross salary (not including employer's social contributions) offered to the researcher. Therefore, it is recommended to liaise with HR in order to define the gross salary and properly advertise it.



Q59. How do we provide evidence that the researchers were informed about the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the recruitment of Researchers?

As stated under Article 18 and more specifically under the Specific rules for MSCA actions, “the beneficiaries must [...] take all measures to implement the principles set out in the Commission Recommendation on the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers and ensure that the researchers and all participants involved in the action are aware of them”. In case of audit, you will be asked to prove that the researchers were informed. Please also bear in mind that as soon as the researchers are recruited, you should also provide them with the link to the Information packages in which reference to the charter and code are also made:

[Information package for Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellows - Publications Office of the EU \(europa.eu\)](#)

[Information note for Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellows in doctoral networks](#)

Q60. In case of a Joint Doctorate, do Doctoral Candidates (DCs) need to be recruited to both doctoral programmes at the same time? Does the DC has to start the PhD programme in both universities in two different countries at the same time?

REA is aware that the process and requirements for enrolling in a PhD program can vary significantly depending on the institution and each enrolment has its own timeline. Therefore, the double/joint/multiple enrolments should be done as soon as possible and in line with the timeline and requirements of the institutions awarding the PhD. Nevertheless, applicants must provide, at the time of the submission of the proposal, a pre-agreement to award a joint, double, or multiple degree to the doctoral candidate(s). The proposal should indicate from which institutions a researcher is expected to receive the degree(s). In addition, the deliverable “Signed administrative agreement to establish a Joint/Double/Multiple Doctorate” must be submitted at month 6.

Q61. Would you share an example career development plan?

You can find guidance on EURAXESS at the following [link](#).

Q62. What happens if a PhD candidate quits halfway, and we don't have any further funds to hire anyone else? What happens with the justification and the delivery of Deliverables, Thesis, etc.?

If a PhD candidate quits halfway, you should normally have enough person months to recruit another fellow to continue the individual research project. If for other unspecified reasons, this is not possible, you will need to apply contingency measures which will depend on how the fellow’s project was linked to the other fellow’s work and how this resignation will affect the project as a whole. Those measures will need to be discussed beforehand with REA and approved by the project officer. You will of course not be penalized for the non-completion of tasks.



Q63. In a project in which a UK partner is an employing associated partner, can the UK partner enrol Doctoral Candidates in their doctoral programme (considering that the UK is becoming an associated partner soon)?

While it is possible for the researchers recruited by the UK partners to be enrolled in a doctoral programme in the UK (since the UK is using its own funding), the Doctoral Candidates recruited by the beneficiaries cannot be enrolled in a doctoral programme in the UK. As stated in the Work programme, “researchers must be enrolled in a doctoral programme leading to the award of a doctoral degree in at least one EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country, and for Joint Doctorates in at least two”.

Q64. If a Beneficiary lead changes institution, is the MSCA DN portable to the new institution?

While we are not sure to completely understand your question, there are 2 scenarios we have envisaged:

- (1) If a beneficiary decides to leave the consortium, its participation will be terminated. The remaining person-months can be redistributed to the remaining beneficiaries, or a new beneficiary can be added in the consortium. The consortium will need to agree, and the changes will need to be approved beforehand by REA.
- (2) If the PI of a beneficiary changes institution, the MSCA DN is not automatically transferred to this new institution. The beneficiary concerned will need to decide whether to continue its participation with another PI or leave the project. In case it decides not to continue, the participation of the new institution in the project will need to be assessed and approved by the consortium and REA. If an agreement is reached, the new institution will be added as a new beneficiary.

Please always contact your project officer for such cases in order to discuss the best way forward.

Q65. if a beneficiary or the project coordinator change affiliation, can they bring the project with them?

See answer to question 64 (Q64).

Q66. If the PhD candidate goes part-time (50%), does this means that their grant extents in time (6 years instead of 3)?

In case a part-time is approved by REA for personal and family reasons, the grant will normally be extended to allow the Doctoral Candidate to implement his full person-months. Please always consult your project officer in such cases, as the Mobility Declaration will also need to be updated.

Q67. What happens if the scientific coordinator (who is an assistant professor) goes on maternity leave, who would replace them?



It is up to the institution to find a suitable replacement in order to ensure a smooth project implementation.

Q68. Are PhD-students that are not a part of the project allowed to attend the Training Schools?

PhD students who are not part of the project can also attend the Training Schools.

Q69. What do you recommend if the scientific coordinator gets a new job in another university (who is also partner in the MSCA-DN)?

This is a very specific question, and we would recommend you to contact your project officer as the answer will depend on many factors.

Q70. If an academic partner (part of the supervisory team) cannot award a PhD, would it be possible to enrol the PhDs to a another (external) public university which can award the PhD. Are there specific requirements in this case?

The suggested setup is possible, but the external university will need to be added as an associated partner in the consortium via an amendment.



B. SECONDMENTS

Q71. What is a general rule for secondments? minimum/maximum period, and maximum number of secondments?

Under DN2022, secondments are eligible for up to one third of the actual months spent implementing the research training activities under the action. This limitation does not apply in the case of Industrial Doctorates and Joint Doctorates.

Inter-sectoral secondments of researchers to other participating organisations, including in third countries, are encouraged when relevant, feasible and beneficial for the researchers and in line with the project objectives. This will increase the employability of the researchers outside academia.

Secondments are already defined at proposal stage and have been evaluated positively. Therefore, it is recommended to implement them as defined in the Annex 1. In case secondments need to be changed to better fit the needs of the doctoral candidates, the changes will need to be discussed and approved by the project officer.

Q72. In case of a split secondment at the same beneficiary, is there a minimum stay obligation for each period? Can it be less than 1 month (for instance 1 week)?

There is no minimum duration for a secondment, but it should be distinguished from a short visit that usually lasts a few days and does not involve any training or supervision. Remote secondments are not allowed. Physical mobility is a key-element of secondments that allow researchers to expose themselves to a different scientific/working environment. In case a secondment cannot be performed full-time, part-time, or split secondments are allowed after the agreement of the granting authority has been sought.

Q73. Is there any example of secondment agreements to be signed with organisations hosting secondments? And is the coordinator required to sign all these agreements or can also other beneficiaries sign them?

There are no examples of secondments agreements. It is up to the consortium to define them in the consortium agreement or via bilateral agreements. The implementation modalities (e.g., distribution of EU funds) are also up to the consortium to define.

Q74. Are secondments declarations (in Researchers tab) compulsory? what happens if one beneficiary does not submit?

Under Horizon Europe, the Researcher's tab is called 'Mobility'. The declarations of secondments are mandatory. It allows REA to verify that the secondment rule has been respected (see Article 18 and the Specific rules for MSCA actions) and that the project was properly implemented as defined in the Description of Action (see Article 11).

It is also part of the reporting obligations as defined in Article 20. In case of audit, failure to declare implemented secondments would be considered as a non-compliance and REA could apply any of the measures described in Chapter 5 of the grant agreement.



Q75. In the case of a Joint Doctorate, institution A recruits for 1 year and a half and institution B for 1 year and a half as well, as for a long secondment. Question is: do we have to pay for the housing of the long secondment?

In MSCA-DN, additional costs arising from each secondment of six months or less, which requires mobility from the place of residence (e.g., travel and accommodation costs) should be covered by the research, training, and networking contributions. In the example mentioned above, which refers to a split recruitment and not to a long secondment, there is no obligation to cover the accommodations costs.

Q76. Assuming that a Doctoral Candidate is supposed to spend a secondment in an associated partner (or beneficiary) during the 36 months project. Is it possible to change the associated partner/beneficiary for such a secondment? if yes, what is the procedure? should we ask permission to the PO?

Changes in secondments can be accepted if they are duly justified, to the fellow's benefit and in agreement with all parties involved (recruiting institution, fellow, hosting institution). The REA project officer must always be informed beforehand through the official communication channels (Formal Notification or message through PPGMS) and must approve the changes before they are implemented. All deviations in secondments must also be reported in each periodic report (interim and final). In case the new secondment involves the addition of a new beneficiary or a new associated partner, an amendment will be required.

Q77. What if the local administration is asking for extra documents difficult (or impossible) to obtain, so that secondment become not feasible?

If a secondment is no longer feasible, the consortium, the recruiting beneficiary and the recruited fellow will need to assess the need to find an alternative (or not). The issue will need to be discussed with the project officer and an adequate contingency plan put in place.

Q78. What happens if a Doctoral Candidate recruited within an ID project (Industrial Doctorate) cannot complete the required secondment period within the duration of the project (i.e., maternity leave, suspension, visa issues)? Can the costs of implemented months be claimed?

In case of industrial doctorates, doctoral candidates must spend at least 50% of their fellowship duration in the non-academic sector. This is a cost eligibility condition as specified under Article 6.2 of the grant agreement.

In case this rule is not respected, the costs will be considered ineligible unless the fellow resigns. In case of maternity leave, suspension, which would affect the exposure to the non-academic sector, please contact your project officer to ensure that a contingency plan is put in place to allow the respect of the rule.



Q79. What is the procedure to add extra associated partners who will host a Doctoral Candidate for a secondment?

Your project officer in REA should be consulted and the change in the secondment plan approved beforehand. It will need to be justified and to the fellow's benefit. If an agreement is reached, the new associated partner will be added via an amendment to the grant agreement. No Letter of commitment will need to be provided by the new associated partner.

Q80. Can an internship be in a research institute related with the themes of the project (e.g., a mathematics institute)?

If by internship, you mean secondment, the answer is yes. If the secondment was not foreseen, please consult your project officer beforehand. See also answers to questions 76 and 79.



C. REPORTING

Q81. How is the process for the Doctoral Candidate (DC) evaluation questionnaire at the end of the project and 2 years follow up? Do they have to be submitted also via SyGMa? Are DCs contacted by with the request to complete or is this their responsibility?

Doctoral Candidates will not get an automatic reminder to complete the questionnaires. It is the beneficiaries' responsibility to remind fellows of this obligation.

As stated in Annex 5 of the MSCA grant agreement, each beneficiary must inform the researchers about “the obligation of the researchers to complete and submit — at the end of the research training activities — the evaluation questionnaire and — two years later — follow-up questionnaire provided by the granting authority”.

The Evaluation Questionnaire can be accessed [here](#) and the Follow-up Questionnaire can be accessed [here](#). Fellows will need to enter the project related information, including the project number and acronym. Please note that the obligation to submit the questionnaire will be checked by our services at the latest in the moment of the final payment.

Q82. In some countries, the PhD requirements are 48 months, and other 36 months, how does the final report work? Should we submit it at the end of the 36 months, or once all the DNs have completed their research?

Please check the [Reporting](#) presentation. The reporting is done at the end of the project and therefore it is not affected by the different PhD requirements. In addition, the completion of the PhD during the project is not mandatory, only the enrolment is.

Q83. Can the coordinator submit the Mobility Declarations (MDs) on behalf of the beneficiary?

Only the beneficiaries can submit a Mobility Declaration. Additional guidance on Mobility Declarations can be found in the [Reporting](#) presentation as well as in the [IT How to](#).

Q84. Is changing of the timing of planned events/deliverables possible? How large problem does it represent?

Any change request can be accepted if justified. The due date of a deliverable can be changed without an amendment by contacting your project officer who will need to approve the change and encode the new delivery date in the system. If an event which is not related to a deliverable changes, the project officer will need to be informed. If the change is minor, no amendment will be required. If it is a major change, an amendment might be needed but this will need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Q85. In the Mobility declaration, we need to declare if a Doctoral Candidate is enrolled in PhD (yes/no). Obviously, enrolment is mandatory, but it is a different



administrative process than the recruitment contract. Does the time delay between the recruitment and the enrolment (due to formal procedures) have any impact?

REA is aware that the process and requirements for enrolling in a PhD program can vary significantly depending on the institution and each enrolment has its own timeline. Therefore, enrolment should be done as soon as possible and in line with the timeline and requirements of the institution awarding the PhD. The enrolment process should start as soon as the fellow is recruited. It will be declared in the Mobility Declaration as soon as the Doctoral Candidate is formally enrolled.

Q86. Can you share templates and/or examples for the different aspects of the reporting process, including the initial ones after the kick-off meetings?

You can find all reporting templates in the Funding & tender opportunities portal under [Reference Documents](#). You will find all available templates under the section ‘Project reporting templates’.

Please also check the [Reporting](#) presentation and [video](#), as well as the [Best practices](#) presentation and [video](#).

If you cannot find a specific template or document, please consult your project officer.

Q87. Where can I find the documents or templates such as the career development plan EC template?

You can find all reporting templates in the Funding & tender opportunities portal under [Reference Documents](#). You will find all available templates under the section ‘Project reporting templates’.

For the career development plan, you can find guidance on EURAXESS at the following [link](#).

Please also check the [Reporting](#) presentation and [video](#), as well as the [Best practices](#) presentation and [video](#).

If you cannot find a specific template or document, please consult your project officer.

Q88. Do beneficiaries report research and finances to the EU or to the coordinator?

During the project, you are expected to provide regular updates on the status of the project via the continuous reporting module.

The continuous reporting includes:

- progress in achieving milestones
- deliverables
- updates to the publishable summary
- response to critical risks, publications, communications activities, IPRs
- programme-specific monitoring information (if required).

Where? The Continuous Reporting Module is accessible through the link you receive at the beginning of the project.



Who? Milestones and deliverables should be submitted by each participant for their work.

What? You should report on milestones and deliverables in accordance with the schedule set out for them.

The Continuous Reporting Module also allows you to report on critical risks, prepare the summary for publication and the programme-specific information on indicators (e.g., Trainings, Gender, Open Data, etc. — if available for your programme and type of action).
Milestones — Control points in the project that help to chart progress (kick-off meetings, steering committees, first-draft of a survey, prototype, etc.) They may correspond to the completion of a key deliverable, which allows the next phase of the work to begin or is needed at intermediary points.

Deliverables — Outputs to be submitted to the EU (publication, leaflet, progress report, brochure, list, etc.)

All this information is automatically compiled to create part A of the periodic Technical Report, at the moment this report is prepared (Locked for review)

See [Online Manual](#) for more information.

In order to receive payments, the consortium must submit periodic reports (following the schedule set out in the Grant Agreement). When these are due, they must be submitted directly in the Periodic Reporting Module of the Portal Grant Management System.

Where? Access to the Grant Management System is available through My Projects > Actions > Manage Project > Periodic Reporting > Technical Part contribution/Financial Statement drafting.

Who? The periodic report should be prepared by the consortium participants together and submitted by the Coordinator.

How? You will be prompted by e-mail for all the actions that you need to carry out for the periodic reporting.

What? In the periodic report, you should report on the progress of the work and costs claimed. When the Coordinator submits the periodic report, the IT tool will capture the information from the Continuous Reporting Module in order to generate the Part A of the Technical Report. The system will also consolidate the Individual Financial Statements and it will generate the use of resources report (if required) and the Summary Financial Statements (for the consortium).

See [Online Manual](#) for more information.

Q89. How should we deal with publications in which no Doctoral Candidates are involved, but which were nevertheless created in the project (supervisors). Can these also be added to the reporting and eligible for funding?



All publications which are related to the project results should be declared in the continuous reporting module (even those in which the Doctoral Candidates were not involved). Nevertheless, it is highly recommended to include Doctoral Candidates as much as possible. The cost of all publications which are linked to the project are covered by the institutional costs.

Q90. What is the consequence if the mobility declaration of a researcher is submitted in the portal more than 20 days after start of recruitment? How strictly is this rule interpreted?

The obligation to submit the mobility declaration within 20 days after the recruitment of each researcher is referred to in the Work programme and therefore, it is crucial it is respected. It is also crucial to update it (if needed) before the submission of the periodic reports as the mobility declaration is the basis for the Individual Financial Statement (submitted by each beneficiary at the end of each reporting period).

In case there is a slight delay, there will be no consequence but please inform your project officer. In case it is not submitted by the time your project is reviewed, no individual financial statement will be generated for the concerned beneficiary and the granting authority may suspend the payment deadline (see Article 29) and apply other measures described in Chapter 5.

If the coordinator breaches its reporting obligations, the granting authority may also terminate the grant or the coordinator's participation (see Article 32) or apply other measures described in Chapter 5. Of course, those are extreme measures and will not be applied in case of small delays.

Q91. What happens if a mobility declaration has not been submitted within the 20 days after recruitment? Is it still possible to correct this until submission of the periodic report?

See answer to question 90 (Q90).

Q92. Is there a need to report how the institutional costs were spent?

There is no need to report on how the institutional costs are spent. Institutional costs (B1) are designed to cover research, training and networking costs that contribute directly to the researcher's career development in the spirit of the action. The use of institutional costs should help the consortium implement the action by covering all research expenses, training and networking activities foreseen in the Description of Action for the benefit of the recruited researchers. This is the reason why the eligibility of institutional costs is linked to the eligibility of the MSCA fellows. In order to achieve the said objectives, there is some flexibility as regards the use of the budget (redistributions of institutional costs within the consortium are allowed, unused amounts can be used to increase the salary of a researcher or organize additional trainings, etc.). The optimisation of the budget and the appropriate use



of the institutional costs for the benefit of the recruited researchers is the sole responsibility of the consortium whose primary obligation is to implement the action as described in Annex 1 and in the spirit of the Work programme. The proper implementation of the action will be assessed by the REA during the course and at the end of the action. So, to conclude, the consortium is solely responsible for the proper use of any institutional funds and the explanation on the use of the institutional costs should not be reported to the REA.

Q93. Practical question: once a researcher declaration is submitted, it isn't possible to do an update. Because it is not possible to indicate that the Doctoral Candidate is entitled to the family allowance when he/she marries during the project, what do we do?

Once a mobility declaration is submitted, only the recruitment period can be edited, and secondments added.

All other changes require the intervention of REA, which needs to open the mobility declaration, putting it in 'draft' to enable updates.

In case the family status of a fellow changes during the course of a project, the initial mobility declaration will need to be updated and a new mobility declaration (with the updated family status of the fellow) submitted.

More precisely, in the initial mobility declaration, the end date of the recruitment will need to be modified as follows: the end date will be changed to one day before the fellow acquired a family.

A new mobility declaration will need to be submitted with as a start date, the first day the fellow can be considered as having a family.

In case you are confronted with this situation, please always consult your project officer for further guidance. Please be aware that this change may require an amendment to increase the EU contribution of the project therefore it is crucial that your project officer is informed.

Q94. What is meant with the start of recruitment when talking about the Mobility Declaration? I thought the declaration needs to be submitted within 20 days of the start of the researcher's assignment and not of the recruitment start?

There might be a difference between the date a fellow is recruited and the actual start date of her/his contract.

When a beneficiary has recruited a fellow, a mobility declaration needs to be submitted within 20 days of the recruitment.

The start date of the recruitment period in the mobility declaration will need to be the first day of the employment of the researcher for the purposes of the action (i.e., the starting date indicated in the employment contract/equivalent direct contract).



D. FINANCE & AUDIT

Q95. Would it be possible to provide the table with minimal allowed gross salaries for all EU countries (on the basis of $3400*CC+600$ AND in case of family $3400*CC+600+660$)?

The living allowance covers, on a monthly basis, the costs for employment with social security coverage, i.e., gross amount, including compulsory deductions under national law, such as employer and employee social security contributions and direct taxes or the fixed-amount fellowship. The mobility and family allowances can also be subject to taxation, depending on the country and institution. Since those vary from country to country and even between institutions in the same country, REA is not in a position to provide such a table. We would recommend you to contact your [National Contact Point](#) and your HR department for further guidance. As a general reminder, REA will only check that the researchers have received the full MSCA allowances to which they are entitled (before the compulsory deductions).

Q96. Can the management or Research, Training and Networking costs be used to cover the travel of the fellow for the in-person interview, or should it be covered by the institution?

The travel costs of the fellow can be covered by the institutional costs. They should be budgeted under category B1/B2. As stated under question 92 (Q92), the granting authority does not require a report on the use of institutional costs and the consortium is solely responsible for their proper use.

Q97. How detailed should the track of costs be done? Is there a common template for the recording of costs?

There is no common template for the recording of costs. The track of costs should be as detailed as possible to prove the eligibility of costs and follow your normal accounting procedures.

As stated in Article 20 of the grant agreement, “the beneficiaries must [...] keep records and other supporting documents to prove the proper implementation of the action in line with the accepted standards in the respective field (if any).

In addition, the beneficiaries must — for the same period — keep adequate records and supporting documents to prove the number of units declared; beneficiaries do not need to keep specific records on the actual costs incurred.

The records and supporting documents must be made available upon request (see Article 19) or in the context of checks, reviews, audits, or investigations (see Article 25).

If there are on-going checks, reviews, audits, investigations, litigation, or other pursuits of claims under the Agreement (including the extension of findings; see Article 25), the beneficiaries must keep these records and other supporting documentation until the end of these procedures.



The beneficiaries must keep the original documents. Digital and digitalised documents are considered originals if they are authorised by the applicable national law. The granting authority may accept non-original documents if they offer a comparable level of assurance”. You can also consult the [Indicative Audit programme](#) for Horizon Europe as soon as it becomes available. It is currently being drafted and will be available shortly. In the meantime, the one of [H2020](#) can be used as the guidance provided is also relevant for the majority of the checks that will be carried out for the MSCA-DN actions.

Q98. How will it be decided who will be audited, and how should spending be documented?

As stated under Article 25 of the grant agreement, the granting authority may carry out audits on the proper implementation of the action and compliance with the obligations under the Agreement. Such audits may be started during the implementation of the action and until the time-limit set out in the Data Sheet (see Point 6). They will be formally notified to the beneficiary concerned and will be considered to start on the date of the notification. The granting authority may use its own audit service, delegate audits to a centralised service or use external audit firms. If it uses an external firm, the beneficiary concerned will be informed and have the right to object on grounds of commercial confidentiality or conflict of interest.

The beneficiary concerned must cooperate diligently and provide — within the deadline requested — any information (including complete accounts, individual salary statements or other personal data) to verify compliance with the Agreement. Sensitive information and documents will be treated in accordance with Article 13.

For on-the-spot visits, the beneficiary concerned must allow access to sites and premises (including for the external audit firm) and must ensure that information requested is readily available. Information provided must be accurate, precise, and complete and in the format requested, including electronic format. On the basis of the audit findings, a draft audit report will be drawn up. The auditors will formally notify the draft audit report to the beneficiary concerned, which has 30 days from receiving notification to make observations (contradictory audit procedure).

The final audit report will take into account observations by the beneficiary concerned and will be formally notified to them.

On record keeping, please see the answer to question 97 (Q97).

Audited beneficiaries are usually randomly selected but audits can also be carried out on beneficiaries with an important number of signed grants or who are deemed risky.

For more details, please see the Audit [presentation](#) and [video](#).

Q99. In Spain, the law does not allow for a contract of defined time longer than 18m anymore. If you continue after the 18m period, the contract type changes to indefinite. How can we offer a contract of 3 years in this case?

On this particular question, we would recommend you to contact your [National Contact Point](#) in order to get the support needed.



Q100. What do you think is the best form of organising consumables costs payment in secondments? Can a receiving institution (beneficiary) request the consumables expenses of Doctoral Candidates at its premises?

The distribution of the institutional costs should be defined in the Consortium Agreement by taking into consideration the tasks to be implemented in the project and the needs for each recruited researcher/beneficiary/associated partner, including during the secondments. Therefore, the modalities of organising the consumables cost payment during secondments are left to the consortium to decide.

Q101. Project Managers are doing a lot of work helping Project Coordinators and the consortium to well-execute the project, but the EU does not allocate a specific budget for them. Are there any plans of EU for this?

There are 2 types of institutional contributions: B.1 Research, training and networking contribution and B.2 Management and indirect contribution. The expenses related to the recruitment of a project manager are covered by the Management contributions. The consortium may agree in the Consortium Agreement that all beneficiaries will contribute to the costs that the coordinator incurs for the management of the whole action and consequently allocate a higher percentage to the coordinator. However, the modalities of this are left to the consortium to decide.

Q102. Is the UK partner contributing to the centralized money pool also for management, events, and training? Will the Doctoral Candidate from the UK need the money from the centralised money pool (from EU partners) to cover the extra costs e.g., travel, training?

Since the UK participates with its own funds and is not a beneficiary of the grant agreement, the costs of the fellow recruited by the UK should not be covered by the EU funds. But it is recommended to sign a bilateral agreement with the UK associated partner in which their participation to the project's costs should also be defined.

Q103. Are there any examples or lists of what counts as eligible costs for research, training and networking costs as well as management and indirect costs?

There is no list of eligible costs for the research, training and networking contributions, and management, indirect costs.

Institutional costs should cover among other the training and networking activities contributing to the Doctoral Candidates career development; they should cover tuition fees, visa related fees, costs links to conferences, travel, and accommodation of secondments of less than 6 months, as well as beneficiary's additional costs in connection with the action (e.g., personnel costs for project management/coordination, indirect costs, consortium agreement, etc.).

More precisely, institutional costs (B1) are designed to cover research, training and networking costs that contribute directly to the researcher's career development in the spirit of the action.



Institutional costs (B2) are designed to cover beneficiary's additional costs in connection with the action (e.g., personnel costs for project management/coordination, indirect costs, consortium agreement, etc.).

The use of institutional costs should help the consortium implement the action by covering all research expenses, training and networking activities foreseen in the Description of Action for the benefit of the recruited researchers, as well as management costs. This is the reason why the eligibility of institutional costs is linked to the eligibility of the MSCA fellows. In order to achieve the said objectives, there is some flexibility as regards the use of the budget (redistributions of institutional costs within the consortium are allowed, unused amounts can be used to increase the salary of a researcher or organize additional trainings, etc.). The optimisation of the budget and the appropriate use of the institutional costs for the benefit of the recruited researchers and the project management is the sole responsibility of the consortium whose primary obligation is to implement the action as described in Annex 1 and in the spirit of the Work programme. The proper implementation of the action will be assessed by the REA during the course and at the end of the action. So, to conclude, the consortium is solely responsible for the proper use of any institutional funds and the explanation on the use of the institutional costs should not be reported to the REA.

Q104. What expenses are eligible within the "mobility allowance"? Are travel and accommodation expenses for the participation of the PhD students to a congress eligible?

The mobility allowance is for the fellow's private mobility related costs (e.g., travel and accommodation costs), not their professional costs (which should be covered by the research, training and networking contributions).

Q105. From which budget will it be possible to buy reagents for research? Will it be possible to buy instrumentation?

The expenses related to reagents and instrumentation can be covered by the research, training and networking contributions (B1 institutional costs).

Q106. Doctoral Candidates are allowed to engage in teaching activities during their recruitment by an academic partner and if yes how/to what extend?

Complementary skills training (e.g., teaching activity as part of the research training) is possible, but must NOT jeopardise the research training activities and must be described in Annex 1 of the grant agreement. In addition, doctoral candidates should by default be employed full-time, unless the granting authority has approved a part-time employment for personal or family reasons. Finally, fellows should not receive any other income for activities carried out in the framework of the action. Therefore, teaching activities are allowed if (1) they do not jeopardize the research training activities, (2) are mentioned in Annex 1, and (3) are not remunerated.



Q107. Should Doctoral Candidates submit timesheets, and if so, how these should align with EU regulations?

In case of audit, it is important to have supporting documentation to justify the eligibility of the person-months claimed. Therefore, you need to keep the contractual documentation, the payroll records, access rights, lab books or other evidence, in order to substantiate the number of months spent by the doctoral candidate (PhD students) on the action. For the doctoral candidates (DCs), timesheets can be used but they are not mandatory. Auditors will check all kind of evidence that the DC worked exclusively and full-time (or part-time, if agreed by the REA) on the project within the beneficiary's premises or the premises of an associated partner during a secondment. Examples of evidence that can be provided are lab books, attendance list, conference abstract, library records, travel expenses, reports to supervisor, meeting minutes, e-mail exchanges and, other open sources (internet) which show that the researcher showed that the DC worked on the action tasks.

With regard to the enrolment, proof of the student registration, access to student services (library, computing, etc.), teaching, supervision, examination and graduation can be used.

You can also consult the [Indicative Audit programme](#) for Horizon Europe as soon as it becomes available. It is currently being drafted and will be available shortly. In the meantime, the one of [H2020](#) can be used as the guidance provided is also relevant for the majority of the checks that will be carried out for the MSCA-DN actions.

Q108. In the "finance" slide it is stated: "If there are unspent institutional costs, REA will not recover them". In case of Audit, will it be requested to prove how budget under B1 & B2 was spent?

The spending and distribution of the institutional costs are left to the decision of the Consortium. The distribution of those costs should be defined in the Consortium Agreement by taken into consideration the tasks to be implemented in the project. The explanation on the use of the institutional costs should not be reported to the REA as the consortium is solely responsible for their proper use. Institutional costs will not be audited as their eligibility depends on the eligibility of the recruited fellows.

Q109. Which budget category covers the travel costs of Doctoral Candidate supervisors to project meetings and events/conferences to represent the project?

The costs of the supervisor can be covered by the institutional costs. They should be budgeted under category B1/B2.

Q110. Since the final/interim payment comes at the end based on the actual units incurred, are the beneficiaries supposed to pre-finance the last months of the Doctoral Candidates employment (= before the payment)?

In case there are no available funds left from the prefinancing received and the interim payment, beneficiaries are indeed required to cover the fellow's salaries.



Q111. I would also like to ask for more clarification on the fate of potentially remaining funds at the end of the project (e.g., from the Mutual Insurance Mechanism - MIM).

30 days from the entry into force of the grant agreement or 10 days before the starting date (whichever is the latest), a prefinancing of 80% is paid to the coordinator (5% goes to the MIM).

At the interim payment, the first reimbursement of eligible contributions (units implemented during the period) is done. The interim payment is capped at 90% of the maximum grant amount.

The final payment (payment of the balance) reimburses the eligible contributions claimed for the remaining units implemented (if any).

The contribution to the MIM (5% of max grant amount) will be released at the final payment or will be offset in case of negative balance.

For more details, see Article 20 of the grant agreement.

Please also consult the [Finance](#) presentation for additional information.

Q112. How should the distribution of the family allowance be handled? The funds should be distributed to the beneficiaries asap but at the start of the project we will not yet know how many Doctoral Candidates will be eligible for family allowance.

The distribution of the prefinancing and interim/final payments is an internal decision of the consortium which needs to be defined in the consortium agreement (to which the REA is not party). Therefore, it is up to the consortium to find a way for distributing the family allowances.

Q113. Can associated partners in MSCA DNs be audited?

Associated Partners are not signatories of the grant agreement, they cannot charge contributions to the action, but they must implement the action tasks attributed to them in Annex 1 – Description of Action. Their costs are covered by the beneficiaries who are encouraged to sign with them a partnership agreement to ensure a smooth implementation of the project and to define any reimbursement arrangements. The costs for the Associated Partners are considered already covered by the unit cost paid to the beneficiaries, no additional costs will be reimbursed by the REA.

Therefore, beneficiaries must ensure that their contractual obligations under Articles 11 (proper implementation), 12 (conflict of interests), 13 (confidentiality and security), 14 (ethics), 17.2 (visibility), 18 (specific rules for carrying out action), 19 (information) and 20 (record-keeping) also apply to the associated partners.

The beneficiaries must ensure that the bodies mentioned in Article 25 (e.g., granting authority, OLAF, Court of Auditors (ECA), etc.) can exercise their rights also towards the associated partners.

You can also consult the [Indicative Audit programme](#) for Horizon Europe as soon as it becomes available. It is currently being drafted and will be available shortly. In the meantime, the one of [H2020](#) can be used as the guidance provided is also relevant for the majority of the checks



that will be carried out for the MSCA-DN actions. Please also check the [Audit](#) presentation of the Coordinator's Info Day.

Q114. There was a massive inflation in the past years, yet the budget of this grant has not been adjusted. Expensive methodology such as in our project becomes difficult, secondment costs go through the roof. How can we solve this issue?

If the EU contribution is not sufficient to cover all project related costs, you should contact your project officer and propose contingency plans, or a modification of the tasks/secondments foreseen in Annex 1 which should nevertheless not call into question the decision awarding the grant. Another possibility is to cover any additional expense with in-kind contributions.

Q115. If a fellow decides to terminate the PhD after 30 months in one Host Institution, is it possible to give the rest of the grant (6 months left) to another fellow from another host Institution?

Such a scenario is possible, but you should bear in mind that the maximum fellowship duration is 36PM. If a transfer is envisaged, it should only be to another fellow whose contract is maximum 30 months. In addition, if the transfer of PMs is between beneficiaries located in different countries, the number of PMs transferred will be affected by the country correction coefficient (CCC). If the CCC is higher, the PMs transferred might be less than 6 months. The transfer might also affect the maximum grant amount as the location of the premises of the beneficiary will have an influence on the fellow's salary in view of the different country correction coefficients.

For all such cases, please contact the granting authority and discuss the case with your project officer.

Q116. We are an Italian SME. The contractual form of CO.CO.CO. formally cannot be in line with the requirements for the DN, but for HEU the EC recognized it as an eligible personnel cost. Is it therefore also acceptable for employing in DN?

For the CO.CO.CO. question. Reference: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/aga_list-country-specific-issues_en.pdf page 5

Concerning Italian work contracts, the corporate "List of country-specific issues" for the current MFF provides guidance on how to deal with 'Assegni di Ricerca', 'Contratto a Progetto' and 'Contratto di collaborazione coordinate e continuative (co.co.co)'.

Costs under these work contracts may be declared as eligible personnel costs if they fulfil the conditions of Article 6.2.A.2 of the model grant agreement (MGA), in particular that the person works under conditions similar to those of an employee. The Annotated Grant Agreement specifies that similar conditions does not mean equal conditions, thus the working conditions of the person do not have to be exactly the same as those of an employee, but overall similar. Having said that, as the wording in Article 6.2.A.2 puts the emphasis on the factual working conditions of the natural person hired by the beneficiary, eligibility needs to be assessed on a



case by case basis taking into account the factual situation, i.e. not all ‘Assegni di Ricerca’, ‘Contratto a Progetto’ or ‘co.co.co’ fall directly in the scope of Article 6.2.A.2 MGA, but it will depend on each specific situation.

Therefore, please contact the Italian National Contact Point and your project officer for further guidance.

Q117. For Swiss partners, how do we populate their budget in the portal?

Please refer to the [DN2023 Call Info Day](#) and to the relevant guidance in the Work programme and Guide for Applicants. An Information Day will be organised in June 2024 for the call DN2024.

Q118. What is the best way to share the cost of the common events organized by a specific partner, among all the partners? Is it possible to define a common pot kept by the coordinator to pay for all common events from the B1 cost category?

The expenses related to the organisation of events are covered by the institutional contributions. The consortium may agree in the Consortium Agreement that all beneficiaries will contribute to a common pot that the coordinator manages. However, the modalities of this are left to the consortium to decide.

Q119. Are doctoral tuition fees eligible costs? Can they be reimbursed to doctoral researchers?

Recruited researchers may NOT be requested to pay visa-related fees, residence permit fees or tuition fees for their research training and PhD degree programme, such as student registration, access to student services, teaching, supervision, examination, and graduation, neither from their own funds, nor from the contributions for them (allowances for recruited researchers). Those expenses should be covered by the institutional contributions.

Q120. If the budget for living costs exceed the host university regular salary for a Doctoral Candidate (DC), can the costs be allocated over a longer period or is it mandatory to give all DCs the exact amount defined by the EU?

If, in addition to the living and mobility allowances, a top-up is needed to cover the full PhD salary in any country (according to the national and institutional regulations), the beneficiaries concerned should find additional sources of funding and/or may use leftovers from the institutional costs to cover the difference (if all the tasks foreseen in Annex 1 of the grant agreement have been implemented). Progressive salaries are accepted as long as the researcher receives the full MSCA allowances by the end of her/his fellowship.

Q121. In some countries (gross) salaries depend on the diploma of the student, e.g., having a medical degree compared to another master’s degree. How do we indicate this in the vacancy if we don't know who will be recruited?



As stated in the Work programme 2021-2022, the vacancy notice (to be widely advertised internationally, including on the EURAXESS website) must include the gross salary (not including employer's social contributions) offered to the researcher. Therefore, it is recommended to liaise with HR in order to define the gross salary and properly advertise it. In case the gross salary also depends on the diploma of the student, this should also be indicated in the vacancy notice, providing as many details as possible.

Q122. When will the indicative audit programme finally be available? We soon completing the third year of Horizon Europe and it is still "coming soon".

The [Indicative Audit programme](#) for Horizon Europe is currently being drafted and will be available shortly. In the meantime, the one of [H2020](#) can be used as the guidance provided is also relevant for the majority of the checks that will be carried out for the MSCA-DN actions. Please also check the [Audit](#) presentation of the Coordinator's Info Day.

Q123. Which section of the budget should be used to cover the cost incurred in the hosting institution (consumables, research related costs) by the secondments of Doctoral Candidates from other institution?

In a MSCA Doctoral Networks, secondments of six months or less which require mobility from the place of residence must be financed using the Research, Training and Networking costs in order to prevent an unreasonable financial burden for the recruited researchers. This includes at least the travel and accommodation costs. Costs for visa-related fees should also be covered by the same cost category. For long-term secondments, it is recommended that the beneficiary makes arrangements with the researcher and the receiving institution in order to avoid double charges (e.g., accommodation).

Q124. Do partners of the consortium need to provide the MSCA platform with timesheets for their own PMs spent in the project?

For the doctoral candidates (DCs), timesheets can be used but they are not mandatory. Auditors will check all kind of evidence that the DC worked exclusively and full-time (or part-time, if agreed by the REA) on the project within the beneficiary's premises or the premises of an associated partner during a secondment. Examples of evidence that can be provided are lab books, attendance list, conference abstract, library records, travel expenses, reports to supervisor, meeting minutes, e-mail exchanges and, other open sources (internet) which show that the researcher worked on the action tasks.

See also answer to question 107 (Q107).

Q125. Are visa costs for Doctoral Candidates (DCs) eligible costs? Do they need to be reimbursed to DCs or is refund optional? Any advise on what to do if visa costs are incurred before a DC is formally employed (local rules may not allow reimbursement in this case).



Recruited researchers may NOT be requested to pay visa-related fees (even if incurred before the recruitment date), residence permit fees or tuition fees for their research training and PhD degree programme, such as student registration, access to student services, teaching, supervision, examination, and graduation, neither from their own funds, nor from the contributions for them (allowances for recruited researchers).

Q126. If a Doctoral Candidate (DC) and the hosting beneficiary agree to terminate the fellowship contract after ~10 months, could another beneficiary undertake the supervision role and receive the remaining 26 unit costs? (40% rule + mobility rule are fulfilled)?

Such a scenario is possible, but you should bear in mind that the maximum fellowship duration is 36PM. If a transfer is envisaged, it should only be to another fellow whose contract is maximum 10 months. In addition, if the transfer of PMs is between beneficiaries located in different countries, the number of PMs transferred will be affected by the country correction coefficient (CCC). If the CCC is higher, the PMs transferred might be less than 26 months. The transfer might also affect the maximum grant amount as the location of the premises of the beneficiary will have an influence on the fellow's salary in view of the different country correction coefficients.

For all such cases, please contact the granting authority and discuss the case with your project officer.

Q127. A PhD student who is funded for 24 months but ends his project within 22 months, will the EU pay the salary for the 22 months spent implementing the project? But if the PhD student did not use all holidays and the university is obliged by law to pay these days in cash, will EU fund these 'salary' costs as well?

The granting authority will reimburse all eligible PMs, therefore the 22 months. The reimbursement will be based on the unit contributions which are defined in Annex 2 of the grant agreement, as living, mobility and family allowance (if applicable).

Those costs will be eligible if:

{total remuneration costs (salaries, social security contributions, taxes and other costs included in the remuneration under the employment contract or other direct contract) or total fixed-amount fellowship costs for the researcher during the action

plus

total mobility costs (household, relocation, and travel expenses and, if they must be paid under national law, taxes, duties, and social security contributions) for the researcher during the action}

divided by the number of actual units}

is equal to or higher than the following amount:

{amount per unit contribution set out in Annex 2 as living allowance

plus

amount per unit contribution set out in Annex 2 as mobility allowance}.



For more details, see Article 6.2 of the grant agreement.

Q128. What falls under the management costs? Only the salary for the project management or also the training, networking, and traveling costs?

There is no list of eligible costs for the research, training and networking contributions, and management, indirect costs.

Institutional costs should cover among other the training and networking activities contributing to the Doctoral Candidates career development; they should cover tuition fees, visa related fees, costs links to conferences, travel, and accommodation of secondments of less than 6 months, as well as beneficiary's additional costs in connection with the action (e.g., personnel costs for project management/coordination, indirect costs, consortium agreement, etc.).

More precisely, institutional costs (B1) are designed to cover research, training and networking costs that contribute directly to the researcher's career development in the spirit of the action. Institutional costs (B2) are designed to cover beneficiary's additional costs in connection with the action (e.g., personnel costs for project management/coordination, indirect costs, consortium agreement, etc.).

The use of institutional costs should help the consortium implement the action by covering all research expenses, training and networking activities foreseen in the Description of Action for the benefit of the recruited researchers, as well as management costs. This is the reason why the eligibility of institutional costs is linked to the eligibility of the MSCA fellows. In order to achieve the said objectives, there is some flexibility as regards the use of the budget (redistributions of institutional costs within the consortium are allowed, unused amounts can be used to increase the salary of a researcher or organize additional trainings, etc.). The optimisation of the budget and the appropriate use of the institutional costs for the benefit of the recruited researchers and the project management is the sole responsibility of the consortium whose primary obligation is to implement the action as described in Annex 1 and in the spirit of the Work programme. The proper implementation of the action will be assessed by the REA during the course and at the end of the action. So, to conclude, the consortium is solely responsible for the proper use of any institutional funds and the explanation on the use of the institutional costs should not be reported to the REA.

Q129. Is it necessary to provide a CFS (Certificate for Financial Statement)?

As stated under Article 21.2 of the grant agreement, the certificates on the financial statements are not applicable to MSCA-DN.

Q130. What expenses should the recruiting beneficiary cover for the Doctoral Candidates long-term secondments (over 6 months)?

In a MSCA Doctoral Networks, secondments of six months or less which require mobility from the place of residence must be financed using the Research, Training and Networking costs in order to prevent an unreasonable financial burden for the recruited researchers. This includes at least the travel and accommodation costs. Costs for visa-related fees should also be covered



by the same cost category. For long-term secondments, it is recommended that the beneficiary makes arrangements with the researcher and the receiving institution in order to avoid double charges (e.g., accommodation).

In addition, the researcher should not bear any costs for implementing the action and this also applies to secondments.

Q131. Can a second scientific co-ordinator from UK be paid from the common pot of the Doctoral Network (CA)? Or is it not allowed to "hand-over" funds to UK partners?

This is an internal decision which should be taken at consortium level. A consortium agreement needs indeed to be signed between beneficiaries and should include the internal arrangements also covering the distribution of the EU funding, including with associated partners. Since the UK participates with its own funds and is not a beneficiary of the grant agreement, a bilateral agreement should be signed with them in which their participation to the project's costs should be defined.

Q132. Our partners from Greece and Italy want to limit the payments to the Doctoral Candidates for costs related to secondments (travel, accommodation) to a certain limit. So not the full payment. Is this legal?

In a MSCA Doctoral Networks, secondments of six months or less which require mobility from the place of residence must be financed using the Research, Training and Networking costs in order to prevent an unreasonable financial burden for the recruited researchers. This includes at least the travel and accommodation costs. Costs for visa-related fees should also be covered by the same cost category. For long-term secondments, it is recommended that the beneficiary makes arrangements with the researcher and the receiving institution in order to avoid double charges (e.g., accommodation).

In addition, the researcher should not bear any costs for implementing the action and this also applies to secondments.

Q133. What falls under the family allowance? Presence of kids or just spouse is enough?

The family allowance contributes to researchers with family. As stated under Article 6.2 of the grant agreement, 'family' means persons linked to the researcher by marriage (or a relationship with equivalent status to a marriage recognised by the legislation of the country where this relationship was formalised) or dependent children who are actually being maintained by the researcher.

Q134. If the actual family allowance costs of the Consortium are higher than the assigned budget, should an amendment be requested to increase the EU contribution?

If the recruited doctoral candidate has or acquires family obligations during the action duration, i.e. persons linked to him/her by (i) marriage, or (ii) a relationship with equivalent status to a marriage recognised by the legislation of the country or region where this relationship was



formalised; or (iii) dependent children who are actually being maintained by the researcher, the family allowance must be paid to her/him as well.

The total family allowance indicated in Annex 2 of the grant agreement represents an average which is based on the assumption that 75% of the Doctoral Candidates will be entitled to a family allowance. Based on past experience, the total family allowance is normally sufficient to cover the project needs (including the cases where the family status will change during the course of the project). In case the family allowance allocated to the project is insufficient, additional funds will be made available by the Commission and the max EU contribution will be increased via an amendment.

For all such cases, please consult your project officer for further guidance.

Please also see answer to question 93 (Q93).

Q135. How can an associated partner be audited considering that the audit is dedicated to ensuring the eligibility of the researcher? They are not paying any EU-funded researchers.

Associated Partners are not signatories of the grant agreement, they cannot charge contributions to the action, but they must implement the action tasks attributed to them in Annex 1 – Description of Action. Their costs are covered by the beneficiaries who are encouraged to sign with them a partnership agreement to ensure a smooth implementation of the project and to define any reimbursement arrangements. The costs for the Associated Partners are considered already covered by the unit cost paid to the beneficiaries, no additional costs will be reimbursed by the REA.

Beneficiaries must ensure that their contractual obligations under Articles 11 (proper implementation), 12 (conflict of interests), 13 (confidentiality and security), 14 (ethics), 17.2 (visibility), 18 (specific rules for carrying out action), 19 (information) and 20 (record-keeping) also apply to the associated partners.

The beneficiaries must ensure that the bodies mentioned in Article 25 (e.g., granting authority, OLAF, Court of Auditors (ECA), etc.) can exercise their rights also towards the associated partners.

You can also consult the [Indicative Audit programme](#) for Horizon Europe as soon as it becomes available. It is currently being drafted and will be available shortly. In the meantime, the one of [H2020](#) can be used as the guidance provided is also relevant for the majority of the checks that will be carried out for the MSCA-DN actions. Please also check the [Audit](#) presentation of the Coordinator's Info Day.

Q136. The living allowance together w/the mobility allowance is not sufficient to meet the minimum salary for Doctoral Candidates as per our country rules. We cover this difference w/the training budget. Do we have to offer additional travel allowance?

If, in addition to the living and mobility allowances, a top-up is needed to cover the full PhD salary in your country (according to the national and institutional regulations), you should find



additional sources of funding and/or may use leftovers from the institutional costs to cover the difference (if all the tasks foreseen in Annex 1 of the grant agreement have been implemented). The REA will check that the fellow was paid the minimum allowances defined in Annex 2 of the grant agreement.

Q137. Who should cover the travel expenses of the Doctoral Candidate (DC) for the relocation to the country of the recruiting beneficiary? The DC using the mobility allowance? Or the recruiting beneficiary using the assigned institutional funds (B1)?

The travel expenses should be covered by the DC using her/his mobility allowance.

Q138. Could the kick-off meeting costs be covered by the project if these costs have been paid before the start of the action?

It is possible to cover the costs of the kick-off meeting before the start of the project if the meeting takes place once the project has started. In order for costs to be eligible, they need to be actually used or produced in the period set out in Article 4 (i.e., during the project).

Q139. Can a Doctoral Network project be extended and eventually for what reasons? Is delay in recruitment and impossibility to complete 36 months of recruitment (and the deriving impact on the accomplishment of research work) a sufficient reason for that?

Extensions are possible. An assessment on a case-by-case base will need to be carried out. Therefore, please contact your project officer in case you experience delays in recruitment. Please also put in place relevant contingency measures, if not already done.

Q140. Is extending a PhD student's contract beyond 36 months possible and using the remaining research and training funds as salary?

It is possible to offer doctoral candidates an extension beyond the maximum 36 months by using for example unspent institutional costs or in-kind contributions. Any contract beyond 36 months will not be within the frame of the MSCA project and those additional months will not be declared in the mobility declaration.

Q141. What is the usual percentage that Coordinator can "retain" for coordination/central management. Please, give us an indicative range even though we know that it depends on each project?

The consortium may agree in the Consortium Agreement that all beneficiaries will contribute to the costs that the coordinator incurs for the management of the whole action and consequently allocate a higher percentage to the coordinator. However, the modalities of this are left to the consortium to decide.



E. GRANT AGREEMENT OBLIGATIONS & AMENDMENTS

Q142. Reference is made to the Grant Agreement (GA) and Annotated Grant Agreement (AGA), while in fact the UNIT Grant Agreement applies, of which moreover there is no annotated version yet. When will annotations become available?

It is correct that the Unit grant agreement applies to MSCA-DN. A draft version of the Annotated Grant Agreement is currently being finalised, but it will not be applicable to MSCA-DN. Nevertheless, a separate document related to the specificities of the MSCA has been published. You can download the MSCA Financial Guide at the following [link](#). It will also be available shortly under the Reference Documents section of the portal.

Q143. Referring to the "What's new?" presentation: no Letter of Commitment is needed for new Associated Partner to be added? This does not seem to be the case when processing amendments (1 AP terminated 1 AP added as replacement).

During project implementation, it is indeed correct that it is no longer required to provide a Letter of Commitment when requesting the addition of a new Associated Partner. Nevertheless, your project officer should be consulted and the addition of the new Associated Partner will need to be clearly justified and approved beforehand by REA.

Q144. What is the process for adding an additional Associated Partner (AP), how long would it take and what is the best time-point to do so? I suppose the new AP also has to bring a Letter of Intent and Organisational Description.

The addition of a new Associated partner will require an amendment to the grant agreement. As indicated in the answer to question 143, it is no longer required to provide a Letter of Commitment when requesting the addition of a new Associated Partner. Nevertheless, your project officer should be consulted and the addition of the new Associated Partner will need to be clearly justified and approved beforehand by REA.

If approved by REA, either you will be requested to launch an amendment immediately or the addition can be formalised in a future amendment, depending on when the addition is requested.

Q145. If the coordinator project leader changes the affiliation due to a new university appointment, is it possible to move the DN to the new affiliation of the coordinator?

While we are not sure to completely understand your question, there are 2 scenarios we have envisaged:

- (1) If a beneficiary decides to leave the consortium, its participation will be terminated. The remaining person-months can be redistributed to the remaining beneficiaries, or a new beneficiary can be added in the consortium. The consortium will need to agree, and the changes will need to be approved beforehand by REA.
- (2) If the project leader of a beneficiary changes institution, the MSCA DN is not automatically transferred to this new institution. The beneficiary concerned will need



to decide whether to continue its participation with another project leader or leave the project. In case it decides not to continue, the participation of the new institution in the project will need to be assessed and approved by the consortium and REA. If an agreement is reached, the new institution will be added as a new beneficiary.

Please always contact your project officer for such cases in order to discuss the best way forward.

Q146. Can we deviate from the template of the Grant Agreement? Can Associated Partners be exempted (who do not receive funding but host Doctoral Candidates) from audits/ investigations? If yes, how to implement (bilateral agreements, changing Grant Agreement)?

The grant agreement (GA) is the funding agreement concluded between the granting authority (REA) and the beneficiaries. It sets out the rights and obligations of each party and the terms and conditions of the grant that beneficiaries must comply with when implementing the action (i.e., the project).

The **majority of the provisions** of the GA **cannot be altered** and any breach may lead to the measures described in Chapter 5 of the GA.

Nevertheless, the GA may be amended. The reasons for making an amendment may vary largely. They may reflect the need to adapt to the changing conditions for implementation of the action/work programme (e.g., modify the initially envisaged budget, prolong the implementation period of the action, etc.). They could also include changes related to the beneficiary itself (e.g., changes in the legal status, address, bank account, legal representative of the beneficiary).

GAs may be amended only in writing. Amendments enter into force on the date on which the last party signs, or on the date of approval of the request for amendment. Amendments then take effect on a date agreed by the parties.

For reasons of legal certainty and equal treatment, the general conditions of the grant agreement or grant decision should remain unmodified.

For more information on possible amendments, see [Amendment Guide](#).

In case you wish to amend your grant agreement, please consult your project officer and bear in mind that all changes need to be approved beforehand by REA.



F. CONSORTIUM AGREEMENT

Q147. If an Associated Partner has a minor role, e.g., Hosting Party, does he have to sign the Consortium Agreement or is the Secondment Agreement sufficient?

It is up to you to decide whether to include or not associated partners in the consortium agreement, depending on the roles and involvement in the Action. If they are not included in the consortium agreement, we recommend that you sign with each associated partner a bilateral agreement. The bilateral agreement (or any other agreement) can be done between the coordinator and the associated partner or between the beneficiary and associated partner with whom a collaboration has been established. The modalities are left to the consortium to decide.

Q148. Do Associated Partners need to sign the Consortium Agreement, or can it be optional?

See answer to question 147 (Q147).

Q149. What happens if a Beneficiary (or Associated partner) eventually decides not to sign the Consortium Agreement (although they have signed the GA)?

Associated partners do not sign the grant agreement, only beneficiaries do.

It is important for all consortium members to conclude a consortium agreement to ensure a smooth and successful action implementation and address potential issues. The consortium agreement should complement the Grant Agreement and must NOT contain any provision contrary to it (or the applicable EU, international or national law).

It should in principle be negotiated and concluded before the grant signature.

If a beneficiary is reluctant to sign, it is advisable to address their concerns through negotiation or seek legal advice to find a resolution. However, the ultimate consequence of not signing may lead to exclusion from the project and its associated benefits.

Q150. What if a partner delays the signature of the consortium agreement because they do not agree on the share of common expenses, despite the fact that they agreed in the proposal phase?

See answer to question 149 (Q149).

Q151. Can the partnership agreement be signed after the deadline of the Consortium Agreement?

If by partnership agreement, you refer to the bilateral agreements to be signed with associated partners, it is indeed possible.



G. COMMUNICATION/DISSEMINATION/EXPLOITATION

Q152. In a project that includes employing associated partners with own funding (e.g., by UKRI and SERI), what are the rules for acknowledgment of funding from the EU (e.g., on dissemination material)? Can logos be presented next to each other?

Under Article 17 of the grant agreement, you must acknowledge EU support and display the European flag (emblem) and funding statement (translated into local languages, where appropriate).

The emblem must remain distinct and separate and cannot be modified by adding other visual marks, brands, or text.

Apart from the emblem, no other visual identity or logo may be used to highlight the EU support.

When displayed in association with other logos (e.g., of beneficiaries or sponsors), the emblem must be displayed at least as prominently and visibly as the other logos.

Q153. Regarding Communication and Dissemination, according to Art. 17.3 GA, we do not see if the disclaimer includes the GA Number, as it has been compulsory for H2020 projects (and previous FP). Has this changed? Could we include it? Thanks.

Under Article 17 of the grant agreement, you must acknowledge EU support and display the European flag (emblem) and funding statement (translated into local languages, where appropriate) but we recommend you to also add in any communication/dissemination activity, the project number, acronym, and call. It will increase the visibility of your project and maximize its impact.

Q154. For HE the acknowledgment for publications should display the EU emblem and 'Funded by the EU.' This is different from H2020. Could you please confirm if in HE, it is not necessary to mention the project and the GA in the acknowledgments?

Your only obligation according to Article 17 of the grant agreement is indeed to acknowledge the EU support and display the European flag (emblem). But we recommend you to also add in any communication/dissemination activity, the project number, acronym, and call. It will increase the visibility of your project and maximize its impact.

Q155. The funding acknowledgement statement is quite long, and some editors do not accept it for the publications. Is it possible to reduce it or provide a link to the full statement?

The funding acknowledgement is very short 'Funded by the European Union'. The disclaimer is indeed long but it can be shortened even though it is mandatory to add it.



H. OPEN SCIENCE

Q156. I have doubts about the recognition of research articles in Open Research Europe for DCs. Currently, research "quality" is measured as function of the impact factor from WoS-JCR. Is there any planned strategy to change this?

Publishing under the [Open Research Europe](#) (ORE) platform does support the recognition of the published articles by MSCA-DN Doctoral Candidates. An article that has passed peer review (i.e., it has received at least two Approved peer review reports, or one Approved plus two Approved with Reservations reviews) will be indexed in bibliographic databases, once the platform has undergone a formal evaluation process by these indexing services. More specifically, Open Research Europe is currently indexed in:

PubMed

PubMed Central

Scopus

ERIH PLUS

Dimensions

Directory of Open Access Journals with the DOAJ SEAL

Google Scholar

CNKI

DHET Accredited Journal Lists

Finnish Julkaisufoorumi

INSPEC

Norwegian Register for Scientific Journals

OpenAlex

Reaxys

Portico

Sherpa

Ulrichsweb

Zenodo

As for the strategy regarding the research assessment, the European Commission is part of an increasing number of funding agencies, institutions and organizations who are keen to support a broader view of a researcher's output – and that it is the intrinsic value of what is published, shared, and re-used, that is important as opposed to the venue, journal, or platform where an article is published. Open Research Europe supports the responsible use of research-related metrics and its application to research assessment - following, among other, the [Leiden Manifesto](#) and the [DORA Declaration](#). Each article published on Open Research Europe includes an article level metrics page demonstrating the individual article's reach, interest, and 'quality'. It also includes traditional indicators (such as article citation data) alongside more qualitative indicators such as views, downloads, social media, and wider engagement.

As part of this strategy is the [signature of the Agreement for Reforming research assessment \(July 2022\)](#) which sets a shared direction for changes in assessment practices for research,



researchers and research performing organisations, with the overarching goal to maximise the quality and impact of research. The [Agreement](#) includes the principles, commitments and timeframe for reforms and lays out the principles for a Coalition of organisations willing to work together in implementing the changes.

Q157. Does the EU provide direct funding for Open Access publication journals that offer open access Gold / Hybrid? Also, are Green open access or open access after an embargo period also fine?

Beneficiaries/authors may publish in the venue of their choice, either in a closed venue (i.e. access to all content is restricted), an open access publishing venue or in a hybrid publishing venue, provided that all their open access-related, as described in Annex 5 (section 6) of the [Annotated Grant Agreement](#), are complied with. However, please note that publication fees are only eligible when publishing in full open access publishing venues (venues in which the entire scholarly content is openly accessible to all) and not in hybrid venues.

Please note that H2020 requirements for publications are no longer valid under Horizon Europe, this implies that all peer-reviewed scientific publications relating to their results, must become immediately open access at the time of publication (see Q161).

The EU offers Horizon Europe beneficiaries [Open Research Europe](#) (ORE), an open access publishing platform with no publishing fees. ORE is offered as an additional publishing option to Horizon Europe beneficiaries. The platform makes it easy for Horizon 2020, Horizon Europe and Euratom beneficiaries to comply with the open access terms of their funding and offers researchers a publishing venue to share their results and insights rapidly and facilitate open, constructive research discussion.

Another option can be to check whether a journal has an open access policy that is aligned to the Horizon Europe requirements with the [Journal Checker Tool](#) (relevant information is provided in the [Horizon Europe Programme Guide](#), see section on Open Science).

Q158. Could you please show an example of Metadata related to the obligation of managing digital research data in line with FAIR?

Part of the Open Science approach in Horizon Europe is the responsible management of research data in line with the **FAIR** principles of ‘Findability’, ‘Accessibility’, ‘Interoperability’ and ‘Reusability’, notably through the generalised use of data management plans, and open access to research data under the principle ‘as open as possible, as closed as necessary’, under the conditions required by the grant agreement. Research data management (RDM) is mandatory in Horizon Europe for projects generating or reusing data.

There is a wealth of information and examples related to managing research data inline with the FAIR principles in the official [Horizon Europe Programme Guide](#). You can refer to: section 16 on Open Science, page 41 on FAIR principles, page 43 on RDM and pages 45-56 on various resources for RDM (i.e., Resources mentioned on pages 48-49).

Some examples of such relevant resources are listed here:



- Horizon Europe - [Data Management Plan](#) template
- [Open Research Europe - Open Data, Software and Code Guidelines](#)
- [FAIR Principles](#) and [FAIRification Process](#)
- OpenAIRE - [How to make your data FAIR](#)
- Scientific Data - [The FAIR Guiding Principles for scientific data management and stewardship](#)
- Science Europe - [Practical guide to the international alignment of Research Data Management](#)
- The [FAIRsharing](#) portal with information and resources on data standards, databases, and policies in the life sciences and other scientific disciplines.
- FAIR Principles for Research Software ([FAIR4RS Principles](#)).
- For developing DMPs: The [DMPONLINE tool](#) (supports the development of project DMPs); [ARGOS](#) (online tool); the [Data Stewardship Wizard](#), a joint ELIXIR CZ and ELIXIR NL tool, helps researchers understand what is needed for FAIR-oriented data stewardship, and build their own Data Management Plans.

Q159. “A copy of the published version or the final peer-reviewed manuscript accepted for publication, is deposited in a trusted repository for scientific publications”: can this be an internal institutional repository?

Repositories can be institutional when operating with the purpose to collect, disseminate and preserve digital research outputs of individual research organisations (institutional repositories, e.g., the repository of University X). Please verify Annex 5, section 6 ‘Open Science’, for more detailed information on all repository requirements of the [Annotated Grant Agreement](#) as well as the section on ‘Open Science’ of the [Horizon Europe Programme Guide](#).

Q160. I didn't understand very well the use of Open Research Europe, shall I publish there directly instead of another journal? Are papers published there indexed in PubMed for example?

[Open Research Europe](#) (ORE) is an online publishing platform developed by the European Commission to which H2020 and HE beneficiaries are encouraged to publish free of cost, during or after the project/grant. By using this platform your publication automatically complies with the HORIZON open access requirements.

ORE Journal is based on an open peer-review model and accepts original articles of all domains of science. Articles in ORE are published under creative commons attribution open licenses (CC BY) and they are indexed in PubMed and other indexes such as Scopus, OpenAlex, Reaxys, IET, GoogleScholar, DOAJ, Dimensions, ERIHPLUS. (See also Q156 for an exhaustive list).

Q161. How should projects deal with publications in journals that do not offer Golden Open Access?



H2020 requirements for publications are no longer valid under Horizon Europe. Open Science is now a legal obligation and, therefore, all peer-reviewed publications must become immediately open access at the time of publication. In practice this means providing online access to scientific information that is free of charge and reusable to the user. Peer-reviewed publications and all data underlying publications should be accessible under Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) or an equivalent open license. Research data of Horizon Europe projects must be Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Re-usable (FAIR). You can also consult the [Horizon Europe Programme Guide](#) at the Open Science section and check also the free-of-charge publishing possibilities offered by the [OpenResearchEurope](#) platform. (See also Q158 and Q160).



I. OTHER

Q162. Application process: 1) participation of "only" 3 partners - advantage or disadvantage (3 minimum required)?; 2) Is there a minimum number of training hours per fellow?

- 1) Please refer to the [DN2023 Call Info Day](#) and to the relevant guidance in the Work programme and Guide for Applicants. An Information Day will be organised in June 2024 for the call DN2024.
- 2) There is no minimum number of training hours. The training should be in line with the individual research project of the Doctoral Candidate and in line with the PhD requirements of the institution awarding the PhD.

Q163. Is there an update on the General information package for MSCA fellows and the Information note for MSCA fellows in DNs to inform them of their rights?

The MSCA Information packages have been published, you can find them at the following links:

[Information package for Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellows](#)

[Information note for Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellows in doctoral networks](#)

Q164. Are there any guidelines about DC's language proficiency?

Under Horizon Europe and the Doctoral Networks programme, there are no longer ESRs (Early-Stage Researcher). The supported fellows are doctoral candidates, i.e., not already in possession of a doctoral degree at the date of the recruitment.

To test their language proficiency, the [Common European Framework Reference for Languages](#) (CEFR), established by the Council of Europe, can be used.

Q165. Will a MSCA Fellowship Certificate confirming the fellows' involvement in the Doctoral Network projects be made available by the REA as was the case for fellows requesting proof of their participation in Horizon 2020 MSCA project?

A certificate will also be provided for fellows requesting proof of their participation in a Horizon Europe Marie Skłodowska-Curie project. The website where the certificate can be requested can be accessed via this [link](#).

Q166. MSCA used to have a website where all management guidelines and documents/templates were available (how to manage your project). Would it be possible to have such a repository, where all information/documents are available?

Please consult the Best Practices presentations, which is available on the [DN 2022 INFO DAY LIBRARY](#). You can find in it all useful links, as well as the link to the [Reference documents](#), the [Online Manual](#) and the [IT How to](#).

You can also find additional information on the [MSCA website](#).



Q167. In order to meet the principles of the Green Charter, it should be considered to increase the MSCA unit costs in order to enable beneficiaries to cover the costs. At this stage, flying is still less expensive than travelling by train.

We are currently assessing how to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transportation. Financial support for greener travel is not excluded as an option in the future, but such an option may also come with drawbacks – such as a risk of greater administrative burden on projects as well as administrative staff if receipts have to be shown to check which modes of transport was used. A decision on this issue will have to be carefully balanced and discussed with our stakeholders.

Q168. I coordinate a MSCA DN which has a Green dimension. Will there be some further networking/intelligence-gathering/good-practice-sharing led by the EU, and how would we tag our DN as being a green one?

In 2024 the MSCA will be producing more specific and thematic guidance. We will also look to increase exchanges on green practices between MSCA projects. More specific guidance will also help identify more concretely which practices can be considered green under the MSCA green Charter.

Q169. Green Policy: How can we drive institutional change, if the relevant stakeholders (Head of University etc.) are unwilling to do so?

The MSCA are committed to supporting the greening of project practices. We are exploring policy options to further support greening initiatives and encourage different stakeholders to allow for the adoption of sustainable practices in MSCA funded projects.

Q170. Do you think that 3 Beneficiaries and 3 Associated Partners are sufficient in this Programme?

Please refer to the [DN2023 Call Info Day](#) and to the relevant guidance in the Work programme and Guide for Applicants. An Information Day will be organised in June 2024 for the call DN2024.

Q171. How do IEROs count with regard to the 40% budget rule at submission stage?

Please refer to the [DN2023 Call Info Day](#) and to the relevant guidance in the Work programme and Guide for Applicants. An Information Day will be organised in June 2024 for the call DN2024.



MSCA DN 2022 – RAISING AWARENESS ON NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES & SYNERGIES

***** THIS SECTION ONLY PROVIDES ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS WHICH WERE NOT ANSWERED DURING THE LIVE SESSION *****

Q172. Could you please give a more detailed example and explanation of how the Seal of Excellence works?

The Seal of Excellence is a quality label first introduced during Horizon 2020, the EU's research and innovation framework programme (2014-2020). It has gradually become a key instrument to create synergies.

The Seal of Excellence is awarded to project proposals submitted under a Horizon Europe call and ranked above a predefined quality threshold but not funded by Horizon Europe due to budgetary constraints.

With this label the Commission recognises the value of project proposals and encourages other funding organisations to take advantage of the high-quality Horizon Europe evaluation process. The Seal of Excellence certificate indicates basic information on the proposal, the call, and the applicant(s). It is unique and safe. It is digitally sealed against fraud, as is the project proposal and evaluation summary report.

Under Horizon Europe (2021-2027), improvements regarding quality and support to the implementation of the Seal of Excellence are foreseen. The uptake of the Seal of Excellence in Structural Funds programmes is further promoted in the context of reinforcing synergies between the research and innovation framework programmes and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). For example, with the guidance document 'Notice on synergies between ERDF programmes and Horizon Europe', as well as through enhancing information flow on the Seal of Excellence project proposals.

Seal of Excellence is currently awarded to proposals that apply under:

- EIC Accelerator
- EIC Transition
- Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions (MSCA) postdoctoral fellowships
- Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) COFUND
- Teaming Horizon Europe Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change

Q173. Regarding Synergies, Seal of Excellence (SoE) is available for Doctoral Networks?

The Seal of Excellence is not awarded to proposals that apply under Doctoral Networks.



Q174. With respect to networking, are there any MSCA events planned for coordinators from the various projects to get together and explore potential collaborations or synergies?

There are no planned events at the moment but we definitely encourage you to contact projects in the same field as yours or in the same country/institution and explore potential synergies. The link of the DN2022 funded projects is available in the [DN 2022 INFO DAY LIBRARY](#). You can also find in the CORDIS database information on projects, topics, and publications funded by the EU's research programs - in multiple languages.

CORDIS belongs to the [Research and Innovation community platform of the European Commission](#) and complements the [Funding and tender opportunities](#) website, where you can apply for funding and search for partners.

Q175. Are there any programmes available providing additional funding to extend the DN to include additional DCs or post-doctoral fellows to the project, or to build a synergy between projects. Would the COFUND programme be appropriate for that?

The most relevant actions in terms of synergies between higher education, research and innovation are: MSCA Doctoral Networks, MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships, MSCA Staff Exchanges, MSCA COFUND, Erasmus+ Mobility for Higher Education Students and Staff, Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters, Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education, Erasmus+ Partnerships for Cooperation, Erasmus+ Partnerships for Innovation, European Universities Initiative Institutions can choose to apply to one or more of these actions, as long as there is no double funding, and participants fulfil the requirements linked to the different actions (e.g. mobility rule or time spent under the action in case of the MSCA).

Q176. Are there any examples of synergies from outside Europe?

Both Erasmus+ and the MSCA offer opportunities for the mobility, training and career development of individuals, including researchers. They fund the development of new study and research programmes (including joint programmes) and contribute to the establishment of collaborative projects which can include the exchange of individuals (e.g. staff). They have a strong international dimension reaching beyond the EU, which can be used to build internationalisation strategies and strengthen Europe's attractiveness as a study and research destination. Both programmes foster cooperation between higher education institutions, but also reach beyond academia, involving organisations from the non-academic sector (e.g. SMEs).

Q177. How could REA help in identifying possible areas for synergies?

Beyond using the [CORDIS](#) database to identify projects with which you could collaborate, we would also recommend you to consult the [Knowledge Valorisation Platform](#). The Knowledge Valorisation Platform connects players in Europe with the ambition to turn research results into sustainable products and solutions for the public good - be it economic or environmental benefits, social progress or improved policy making. It builds a community where you can



share your experiences, listen to lessons learnt or work together with different partners from all over Europe.

Finally, you can also use the [Horizon Results Platform](#) which is a public platform that hosts and promotes research results thereby widening exploitation opportunities. It helps to bridge the gap between research results and generating value for economy and society. You can create your own page to showcase your results, find collaboration opportunities and get inspired by the results of others.

You can also contact your project officer to get support and advise.

Q178. Sharing data among different networks was mentioned as an option to implement synergy. How can be dealt in cases in which the Consortium Agreement in one of the networks is already signed and such data sharing is not included.

In this case, you can envisage a revision and amendment of your Consortium Agreement.

Q179. We are a small DN. How can we find other small DN for joint activities? Is it possible to filter the search with regards to number of project partners or PhD Students?

This information can be retrieved from the [CORDIS](#) database.

Q180. If developing a new research synergy during the project, where DCs are interested in working on NEWLY EMERGING synergistic research aspects, how does this square with the obligation of the Fellow working EXCLUSIVELY on the action/Annex 1?

This is a very specific question and additional information would be needed in order to provide a proper reply. Therefore, please contact your project officer.

Nevertheless, please bear in mind that collaborations and research in other areas could be envisaged if they are somehow integrated in a project, that there is no double funding and, that the participants fulfil the requirements linked to the different actions (e.g. time spent under the action in case of the MSCA).

Q181. Is the guide on synergies between MSCA and other EU programmes already available?

Both guides are available at the following links:

[Synergies between the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions and Erasmus+ in the area of higher education](#)

[Synergies between the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology](#)

You can also find additional information in the [presentation](#) which was given by Anouk Lafortune.

Q182. @Anouk: Can we use ERASMUS+ Mobility for long secondments (12months) in MSCA-DN?

Researchers and institutions can apply to/participate in Erasmus+ actions, as long as:



- 1) there is no double funding
- 2) participants fulfil the requirements linked to the different actions (e.g., MSCA fellows work exclusively for the action)

With these conditions in mind, MSCA fellows can participate in *Erasmus+ Mobility Projects for Higher Education Students and Staff* funded blended intensive programmes, either as fellow learners (e.g., doctoral summer schools, mobility in a potential fourth year or for recent graduates, etc.) or teachers to present, explain and share their research methodology and results with students.

We invite you to read through the [Guide on synergies and complementarities between MSCA and Erasmus+ in the field of higher education](#) for more details.

Q183. @Anouk: Does this mean that we can use Erasmus+ Mobility Funding for Doctoral Candidates for traveling to other Erasmus+ partners?

See answer to question 182 (Q182).

Q184. How can we join the Pan-European network? It looks like a great initiative.

You can find more details on how to join in the presentation which was uploaded in the [DN 2022 INFO DAY LIBRARY](#).

Q185. @Hakim Ferria - Do you have guidelines for new DN project managers? From organizations to outreach of deliverables and control of the work and synergies between partners.

Currently, there is no existing guideline for new DN project managers. The creation of such a resource is deemed highly valuable, and the Research Management Working Group is pushing towards developing this document. In the interim, the group conducts monthly meetings to facilitate the exchange of best practices and experiences. These sessions are also designed to assist new DN project managers as they embark on their roles.

Q186. Can the Deep Tech Talents scheme be used to complete the financial support for a Doctoral Candidate funded for 36 months instead of 48 months request by the university for his/her defence?

The Deep Tech Talents scheme is open to PhD candidates and post-doctoral researchers currently working in ERC, EIC Pathfinder, MSCA, EIT and RI actions. They can be seconded during their MSCA fellowship for 3-6 months secondments. The rules of the original funding scheme, in our case MSCA-DN, always apply. Since the idea is to send already recruited doctoral candidates to innovative startups, this can only happen during the MSCA fellowship and the reimbursement of the internship costs will be borne by the MSCA programme. Therefore, the Deep Tech Talents scheme cannot be used to complete the financial support of a Doctoral Candidate.