

DOCUMENTO RESUMEN CON DUDAS RESUELTAS CONVOCATORIA MSCA DOCTORAL NETWORKS 2021 – 12/11/2021

Documento práctico en el que se recogen algunas de las dudas planteadas por las y los Puntos Nacionales de Contacto MSCA a nivel europeo así como las contestaciones recibidas por la [Agencia Ejecutiva de Investigación](#) (REA) al respecto.

Este breve resumen incluye aspectos relacionados con reglas de participación, sistema de envío de la propuesta, aspectos de contratación, ciencia abierta, cuestiones de implementación y consultas referentes al personal pre-doctoral a contratar en los proyectos.

Conviene destacar que la Comisión Europa ha publicado una sección completa de [Dudas frecuentes](#) ubicada en la propia convocatoria MSCA DN 2021. En la misma se van actualizando y resolviendo las consultas más recurrentes de esta convocatoria en Horizonte Europa.

Questions and Answers

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About eligibility and submission aspects

Question 1: will DN - ID and DN - JD modes continue to be eligible with a reduced size (fulfilling eligibilities)?. For example Industrial Doctorates with 3 or 5 Doctoral Candidates?

Answer: they will. For industrial or joint doctoral programmes, the EU contribution can go up to a maximum of 540 person-months to further incentivise the development of these schemes but ID/JD modes will continue to be eligible with a reduced size if they fulfil the minimum eligibility conditions.

Question 2: how should affiliated entities appear in the proposal?

Answer: affiliated entities are not allowed to participate in MSCA as they cannot claim costs in MSCA Doctoral Networks. If the question is about Associated Partners linked to a beneficiary, they should be registered in the proposal part A as "Associated Partner" and also described in the participants list at the beginning of the part B1 and in the Participant description tables in the part B2 (see MSCA-DN proposal template for detail).

Question 3: for an Associated Partner in charge of delivering a double or joint degree, will a pre-agreement and a commitment letter need to be provided for this associated partner or only a pre-agreement ?

Answer: both. All associated partners must include a letter of commitment. Applicants to DN-JD (awarding a joint/double or multiple doctoral degree) must also submit letters of pre-agreement.

Question 4: how should Associated Partners with a capital or legal link to a MSCA Beneficiary appear in the Part A (step 4) of the project proposal?

Should they be listed as Associated Partners as there is no possibility to add "Associated Partner linked to a Beneficiary" (the only option is to add "Beneficiary" or "Associated Partner")?

If yes, how should we declare the link other than "Same control", "Controls" and "Is controlled" between an Associated Partner and a Beneficiary in Part A?

If yes, should they also provide a Letter of Commitment (as the standard Associated Partners)?

Answer: for this first call, it is indeed not possible to differentiate between associated partners and associated partners with a capital/legal link to a MSCA beneficiary. The applicants need to add them as associated partners in part A and then describe the link accordingly in the part B. If the proposal is selected for funding, they will be able to add the link to the beneficiary in the system during the Grant Agreement Preparation.

For the 2021 DN call, the associated partners with a capital/link to a MSCA beneficiary also need to provide a letter of commitment as the standard associated partners. This is mentioned in the template letter in the part B template.

Question 5: will it be possible to add additional Ethics related documents (on top of the explanations in Part A text boxes) as separate annexes or as part of B2?

Answer: only an ethics self-assessment is required. No additional documents should be submitted at proposal stage. Any additional documents might be requested during the Grant Agreement Preparation or during the project implementation (ethics check), but only for severe or complex ethics issues.

Question 6: how should applicants fill in the Budget Table of Part A in the case of multiple recruitments (DN-ID and DN-JD modes)? The final number of PM is correct (360), but taking into account that each institution has to recruit 2 fellows (18 months each), then the number of researchers is multiplied in the total of recruited researchers, summing up 20 instead of 10 persons.

Answer: applicants can add as many entries as needed, each one linked to a recruitment. What is important is the total PMs. Please note that for DN-ID the maximum is 540. No worried for the number of researchers in part A, this will be explained in part B.

About implementation

Question 1: can postgraduate enrollment fees be paid for through the DN budget? If so, do they come out of the RTN budget?

Answer: yes, there is a relevant FAQ from H2020 which is still applicable.

Question 2: in the Work Programme, it states that the Research, Training and Networking costs should cover "additional costs arising from each secondment of six months or less". If a secondment lasts for longer than six months, how should these "additional costs" be paid for? What part of the budget should cover those costs?

Answer: Institutions can still use the RTN costs and we highly encourage the supervisors to support the fellows as much as possible, especially if they have to keep another rent elsewhere.

Open Science / Data Research Management

Question 1: what information has to be provided in Section 1 Excellence and Section 2 Impact respectively?

Answer: a new FAQ has just been published on how to address Open Science/data issues in the proposal. Some aspects should be addressed in the project methodology under Excellence, while others are more related to dissemination (e.g. publications in open access etc...), and should be addressed under Impact. We also highly encourage the applicants to check the relevant section of the general guidelines - HE Programme Guide (link available at the end of the FAQ and on the call page).

Open science practices are only assessed under the Excellence criterion / section 1.2 Soundness of the proposed methodology. The MSCA endorse Open Science by promoting Open Science practices through targeted training activities, ensuring open access to research outcomes, including FAIR data handling, encouraging formal and informal science education and feeding back research results into teaching and education. The emergence principles of Open Science and its future growth should be taken into account, embedded in the training of doctoral candidates. Doctoral Networks (DN) projects could, for example, offer training on the use of Open Access, and seek to ensure that the results, data and publications produced by the project are available in Open Access repositories. DN projects should also ensure that procedures are in place to promote and manage the issue of research integrity within the project consortium. Training on research integrity and ethics should also be provided.

Question 2: the paragraph stating “Research data management and management of other research outputs: Applicants generating/collecting data and/or other research outputs (except for publications) during the project must provide maximum 1 page on how the data will be managed in line with the FAIR principles...”. Is this 1 maximum page compulsory?

Answer: this is the general wording for all HE programmes. A higher emphasis has been put on Open Science aspects under HE, compared to H2020, and it should also be reflected in all proposals and projects.

Participation of Swiss Institutions

Question 1: if an institution from Switzerland (Third Country Non-Associated Partner) is included in a consortium willing to recruit doctoral candidate at their own cost, how is this reflected in Part A and the Budget section? Do these PM have to be sum up or not?

Answer: please see FAQ: In Horizon Europe MSCA Doctoral Networks (DN), do applicants have to declare in part A the person-months funded with own resources? In an MSCA DN, where associated partners propose to fund their own participation in the action, or beneficiaries propose to fund additional person-months (over the 360 or 540 person-months limit) from another budget source, these person-months should not be indicated in Part A of the proposal, but instead they must be clearly indicated in Part B of the proposal. A clear explanation of this set-up and of the use of own resources should therefore be provided in Part B.

Question 2: regarding association, if the association status of a country changes between the submission of a proposal and the signature of the grant agreement, will this affect the budget of a proposal? For example, when Swiss partners are involved as associated partners, but they will recruit ESRs on their own costs, and the status changes, will they be able to claim costs?

Answer: in case Switzerland is associated to Horizon Europe before the signature of the grant agreement, project partners based in Switzerland who participate in a collaborative project as participants from a non-associated third country (and therefore receive funding via the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation, SERI) will normally continue to receive funding from SERI for the entire duration of the project, unless a specific solution were found during the association negotiations between Switzerland and the European Commission.

About recruitment options

Question 1: can you provide practical example of how the split recruitment will work and if there are any things beneficiaries need to be aware of (from experience)?

Answer: please see the relevant FAQ: In order to respect all MSCA DN rules (e.g. all beneficiaries recruit at least one fellow) and Industrial Doctorates (ID) / Joint Doctorates (JD) specific rules (e.g. min 50% in the non-academic sector for ID), multiple recruitment should be foreseen.

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 (see Table 2 of the MSCA Work Programme 2021-2022). It may also affect the eligibility of the proposal (see for example the 40.0% rule and the mandatory recruitment rule by each beneficiary above).

Applicants are invited to consider that in IDs and JDs fellows will have to spend long periods in different countries with different country coefficients. If not duly considered at proposal stage by choosing the most appropriate recruitment option (or the most appropriate recruiting beneficiary), this might have negative implications on the capacity of the fellows to afford the cost of living during their mandatory secondments.

Please also note that in case of multiple recruitment, a mobility declaration should be submitted by each recruiting institution.

Example for ID: Beneficiary X (academic) recruits the fellow X for 18 months and beneficiary Y (non-academic) recruits fellow X for the remaining 18 months. Example for JD: a fellow is recruited by beneficiary X but in order to obtain a double degree, the fellow needs to be present for 12 months at the location of beneficiary Y. In this case, it would be advisable, if the country coefficient of beneficiary Y is higher than the country coefficient of beneficiary X to offer the fellow a contract of 24 months with beneficiary X and a contract of 12 months with beneficiary Y.

Question 2: if a consortium does not want to use split recruitment of the joint or industrial doctorate is this OK or will they be penalized?

Answer: split recruitment is not mandatory but may allow the applicants to fulfill all eligibility conditions in some proposals set-up and for some fellows (e.g. for ID: minimum 50% of the fellow's time in the non-academic sector, all beneficiaries must recruit at least one researcher, maximum 1/3 of the fellow's recruitment time in secondments).

Question 3: in the situation where there are multiple or split recruitments (e.g. Doctoral Candidate recruited at Institution A (UK) – recruited for 18 months then recruited at Institution B (France) for 18 months), would it be possible to do a 12 month secondment whilst recruited at Institution A and therefore no secondment at Institution B or is it only the case that the maximum secondment period would be 6 months at Institution A and B, as the definition is 'a duration of up to one third of his/her actual recruitment period'?

Answer: we will apply the flexibility we had under H2020, meaning that the 1/3 secondment period will be calculated based on the total person-months implemented by the fellow.

Question 4: we would like to hear if part-time recruitment would be allowed for DN-ID if the fellow does the academic and non-academic part of their project in the same country. So could a fellow have a 50% contract at both his academic and non-academic host at the same time for the whole 3 years? Of course this is only possible when the two hosts are near each other and if it makes sense for the ESR project to work 50% at both sites at the same time.

Answer: unfortunately, the current Work Programme does not allow part-time recruitment in DN for professional reasons, so this option is not possible for the moment. However, some updates to the Work Programme will be proposed in order to allow this possibility.

About doctoral candidates

Question 1: regarding the mobility rule for doctoral candidates, will this be aligned with the PF mobility rule? Namely considering both where they are residing and the country in which they are working i.e. someone is residing in France but working remotely in the UK would not be eligible to apply for an DN post in either France nor in the UK.

Answer: indeed. The mobility rule states that "The researcher cannot have resided or carried out his/her main activity (work, studies, etc.) in the country of the beneficiary for more than 12 months in the three years". Therefore, the researcher will be ineligible in both countries: country of residence as well as country of main activity.

Question 2: are periods spent in the host institution country for medical reasons taken into account in the mobility rule? Are those periods considered as periods during which the candidate resided in the country of the host institution ?

Answer: only compulsory national service, short stays such as holidays and time spent as part of a procedure for obtaining refugee status under the Geneva Convention are not taken into account when checking the compliance with the mobility rule. Periods spent in the host institution country for medical reasons are taken into account in the mobility rule.

Question 3: for family allowance which is required during the project, will this come as top-up funding for the DN or does the beneficiary have to find this additional allowance from the existing budget already awarded?

Answer: compared to H2020, there will be an increase from 50% to 75% of the estimation of fellows receiving a family allowance at the proposal stage. This will hopefully cover all cases where a family allowance needs to be paid (even those cases where the family status changed 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.