

**Ministry of University and Research
Directorate-General for Internationalisation and Communication**

**Public notice for the submission of project proposals to be funded
under the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP)**

**Mission 4, “*Education and Research*” - Component 2, “*From Research to
Business*” - Investment line 1.2, “*Funding projects presented by young
researchers*”, funded by the European Union – NextGenerationEU**

**Funding of projects for young researchers who have obtained a
“Seal of Excellence” in MSCA calls**

Guidelines for Applicants

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1. Purpose

This guideline relates to [Public Notice no. 247/2022¹](#) (henceforth “*Notice*”) which supports the research activities of young researchers who have won the “**Seal of Excellence**” following their participation in the “Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowships” and “Marie Skłodowska-Curie Global Postdoctoral Fellowship” calls and aims to support the applicants (researchers) in participating in this Notice.

2. Recipients

The Public Notice addresses **400 young researchers**, defined as *applicants*, who have obtained a “**Seal of Excellence**” following participation in the “Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowships” and “Marie Skłodowska-Curie Global Postdoctoral Fellowships” calls within the Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe framework programs.

The “Seal of Excellence” is a quality mark awarded by the European Commission to excellent Research and Innovation project proposals presented in response to the Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe calls. Proposals that receive a positive evaluation (above the threshold) but are not funded due to the exhaustion of the available resources, receive a “Seal of Excellence”.

These projects are deemed worthy of funding and could receive support from other Union or national funding resources. The seal contains basic information on the project proposal, on the reference call and on the applicant. Furthermore, it is digitally protected against fraud, as well as the project proposal and the evaluation summary report.

Young researchers who have received **notification of the achievement of the “Seal of Excellence” in the 48 months prior to the date of publication of this Notice (23 August 2022)** are eligible for funding.

The beneficiaries of the grant, defined “**Implementing Entities**”, are:

- State and non-State **universities** and **university** institutions, including telematic universities, regardless of their name, including high schools with a special system;
- **public research bodies** supervised by the Ministry of University and Research, with operational headquarters throughout the national territory.

Each applicant may submit **only one proposal** under this Notice.

3. Type of projects

The projects must constitute a **readjustment of the original proposal** (“First Submission”) which obtained the “Seal of Excellence”. The changes have to be in line with the budget provided, the chosen Host Institution, and any different scientific context.

¹ A courtesy translation of the Notice is available at the following link: [DD 247 ENG Courtesy translation v2.pdf \(mur.gov.it\)](#). Please note that in case of discrepancy between the Italian language original text and the English language translation, the Italian version shall prevail.

3.1. Fundable interventions

Project proposals can relate to a **research area** belonging to the scientific-disciplinary macro-sectors covered by the “MSCA Individual Fellowships” and “MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships” calls (listed in Annex 1C):

- Chemistry (CHE)
- Social Sciences and Humanities (SOC)
- Economic Sciences (ECO)
- Information Science and Engineering (ENG)
- Environment and Geosciences (ENV)
- Life Sciences (LIF)
- Mathematics (MAT)
- Physics (PHY).

3.2. Eligibility criteria

The project proposals must:

- be consistent with the objectives and purposes of Regulation (EU) 2021/241, with the general strategy and the component of the NRRP;
- aim at achieving the results measured with reference to Milestones and Targets assigned to the Investment;
- comply with the “do no significant harm” principle, pursuant to Article 17 of Regulation (EU) 2020/852, in accordance with the technical guidelines prepared by the European Commission (Communication from the Commission 2021/C58/01);
- be suitable for addressing and bridging gender inequalities;
- support the participation of women and young people;
- promote the exploitation of research results and guarantee the protection of intellectual property, ensuring open access to the public, access to research results and related data (for example, publications of original scientific research results, raw data and metadata, sources, digital graphic and image representations and scientific multimedia materials), in the shortest time and with the least possible limitations, according to the principles of “Open science” and “FAIR Data”.

Furthermore, the Applicants must:

- declare **compliance with the “do no significant harm” principle** by signing and transmitting the Declaration of compliance with the DNSH principle (**Annex 2C**).
- fill in the self-assessment form for **compliance with ethical requirements** (**Annex 3C**).

3.3. Duration

The activities envisaged in the project proposal must be carried out within a **maximum period of 24 months** and – in any case – no later than **20 December 2024**.

3.4. Role and classification of the Applicant

The types of contractual classification of the applicant at the Host Institutions are:

- a. **Fixed-term researcher** (“RTD-A”): three-year contract at universities
- b. **“Third level” professional researcher**: three-year contract at Public Research Bodies

4. Presentation of the application

The Ministry, at the opening of the terms for submitting the application, will guarantee access to the <https://www.gea.mur.gov.it> platform for those authorized to submit the project proposal. Through this access, it will be possible to perform **all the activities related to the submission of the application**.

Applications for participation must be submitted in English, under penalty of exclusion and inadmissibility, exclusively electronically via the <https://www.gea.mur.gov.it> platform, **starting from 5 September 2022 and strictly no later than 25th October 2022 at 12:00 PM** (Rome time).

The application must be signed by the Applicant and must be complete with all the documents required in the Notice. These documents must comply, in terms of contents and methods of sending, with the indications set out in the Notice.

By the closing date of the terms for the submission of applications (25th October 2022), the Applicant must submit a project proposal to a potential Host Institution, according to the format provided in Annex 4C, and sign a preliminary Agreement with the Host Institution, according to the format provided by the Annex 5C.

Furthermore, the Applicant must **acquire an Evaluation Report signed by the Host Institution**, according to the format provided by Annex 6C and the evaluation criteria established in the Notice, together with the **documentation certifying compliance with the “do no significant harm” (DNSH) principle**, pursuant to Article 17 of Regulation (EU) 2020/852.

Each application must include:

- The **project registry form** of the “First submission” with which the “Seal of Excellence” was obtained; this includes the title of the project, the scientific-disciplinary macro-sector, the reference call, the abstract, the value of the project, the upload of the “First submission”, the date of communication of the achievement of the “Seal of Excellence”, the score obtained in the Evaluation Summary Report, the upload of the “Seal of Excellence”.

- The form of the **research proposal** that adjusts the “First submission”, which includes the title of the related project, the scientific-disciplinary macro-sector, the duration of the project, the keywords (maximum 5), the abstract of the project.

In addition, the **following documents** must be uploaded in the "Attachments" section:

- i) Identity document of the Applicant
- ii) Evaluation Summary Report received for the original project (“First submission”) with which the "Seal of Excellence" was obtained
- iii) “Seal of Excellence”
- iv) “First submission” of the project that obtained the “Seal of Excellence”
- v) Host Institution Evaluation Report (Annex 6C)
- vi) Project proposal (Annex 4C)
- vii) Curriculum Vitae of the Applicant
- viii) Preliminary agreement between the Host Institution and the Applicant (Annex 5C)
- ix) Declaration of fulfilment of the DNSH principle signed by the Applicant (Annex 2C).

5. Costs determination criteria

The grant disbursed is equal to € **150,000** and corresponds to 100% of the costs of the projects presented by the Applicants. The amount of the grant is to be understood as a **lump sum payment**.

6. Evaluation Criteria

The **selection and evaluation procedures are carried out by each potential Host Institution** to which the applicant submits a project proposal.

To carry out the evaluation, the Host Institutions indicated by the applicant, within their autonomy, appoint one or more Evaluation Commissions.

The evaluation is based on the following criteria:

1. Scientific congruity: Consistency, clarity and ambition of the objectives of the MSCA (First submission) project which obtained a "Seal of Excellence"
2. Expected impact of the project on the scientific, social and economic level, and adherence to European and international policies (for example, the Sustainable Development Goals and the 5 Missions of the Horizon Europe Framework Program) and in terms of knowledge transfer and / or technology
3. Implementation and feasibility; robustness, clarity and feasibility of the proposed plan on schedule

The achievable score for each criterion is in the range between **0** (The proposal does not meet the evaluation criteria and / or cannot be evaluated due to missing information) and **5** (The proposal successfully addresses the evaluation criteria, and any shortcomings are to be considered marginal).

The **maximum score that can be achieved is 15**.

Projects that achieve an overall score **lower than 9 out of 15** or that have at least a score on the individual criteria **lower than or equal to 1** are **not eligible** for the grant.

7. Admission Procedures

The admission procedure consists of the following steps:

1. Formal-administrative evaluation of applications

This phase is carried out within **30 days from the deadline** for the submission of applications (25th October 2022 at 12:00). This evaluation is carried out by the offices of the Directorate-General for Internationalisation and Communication to verify compliance with the method of submitting the mandatory documentation, the timing and the necessary requirements for participation.

The shortcomings of the formal elements of the application can be regularized through the “**application assistance**” procedure: in this case, the Ministry assigns to the Applicant a suitable deadline for regularization, after which, in the absence of integration of the documentation, the project proposal is declared excluded.

The deficiencies in the documentation that prevent the clear identification of the Applicant and / or the identification of the content subject to regularization cannot be regularized through the application assistance procedure.

2. Drafting of a single national ranking

Upon completion of the formal-administrative evaluation, the Ministry sorts the applications received in a single list, in descending order of score, based on the Evaluation Reports signed by the Host Institutions.

The Ministry draws up and publishes the list of eligible subjects on the platform <https://www.gea.mur.gov.it>. Within the ranking, **priority is given to proponents whose headquarters are in the Southern Regions, up to 40% of the available financial resources**.

If the overall score between several proposals is equal, the proposal with the highest score assigned to criterion 1 (Scientific congruity) prevails. In case of a tie in the score of criterion 1, the project with the highest score assigned to criterion 2 (Impact) prevails. In the event of further equality, the project proposal submitted by the youngest candidate on the date set for the closing of the deadline for submitting applications will prevail.

8. Attachments to the Notice

8.1 Annex 2C (Declaration of compliance with the DNSH principle)

With Annex 2C, the proponent declares that the project proposal complies with the “do no significant harm” (DNSH) principle, pursuant to Article 17 of Regulation (EU) 2020/852.

The principle is divided into **six objectives**, to which the project proposal must not cause significant harm:

- i) *Climate change mitigation*: research activities must not generate a significant increase in greenhouse gas emissions
- ii) *Adaptation to climate change*: Research activities must not have an increasing negative impact on current and future climate, on the activities themselves, or on people, nature or properties
- iii) *Sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources*: the activities must not be harmful to the good health of water bodies (surface, underground or marine) nor compromise their quality or reduce their ecological potential;
- iv) *Transition to the circular economy, including waste prevention and recycling*: activities must not lead to significant inefficiencies in the use of recovered or recycled materials, must not increase the direct or indirect use of natural resources, or increase significantly waste or its combustion or disposal, causing significant long-term environmental damage;
- v) *Prevention and reduction of air, water and soil pollution*: the activities must not lead to an increase in emissions of pollutants into the air, water or soil;
- vi) *Protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystem health*: the activities must not harm the good state and resilience of ecosystems or the conservation status of habitats and species, including those of interest to the European Union.

Furthermore, in line with the European Commission's Communication 2021/C58/01, research activities **must not include**:

- i) activities related to *fossil fuels*, including downstream use;
- ii) activities under the *EU Emissions Trading System (ETS)* which result in projections of greenhouse gas emissions not lower than the relevant benchmarks;
- iii) activities relating to *waste landfills*, incinerators and mechanical biological treatment plants;
- iv) activities where *long-term waste disposal* can cause damage to the environment.

Furthermore, research activities must be compatible with **relevant national and European environmental legislation**.

Annex 2C includes a **table** that shows the six objectives in which the DNSH principle is articulated. For each objective, the applicant must indicate with a yes or a no if the research activity complies with the DNSH principles and must provide a precise justification for the answer.

Example 1

Environmental goal: Climate change mitigation

Was the DNSH principle fulfilled with regards to the environmental objective?: Yes

Justification: The measures adopted to modernize the technological assets do not lead to a significant increase in greenhouse gas emissions, as the new equipment has higher environmental performance than those it replaces and as the interventions will ensure maximum energy efficiency. Since the digitalization of processes involves aspects related to the management of big data, the activities will use servers managed according to the “2019 Best Practice Guidelines for the EU Code of Conduct on Data Center Energy Efficiency (JRC)”. Refrigerants used in refrigeration systems will comply with the requirements of the EU Gas Regulation.

Example 2

Environmental goal: Climate change adaptation

Was the DNSH principle fulfilled with regards to the environmental objective?: Yes

Justification: The measure has no foreseeable or negligible impact on the environmental objective, in relation to the primary direct and indirect effects of the measure in its life cycle, given its nature. Therefore, the measure is considered to be DNSH compliant within the scope of this objective.

8.2 Annex 3C (Declaration / checklist on ethics signed by the Applicant)

Annex 3C represents the declaration, in the form of a **checklist** that the applicant must complete and sign to certify the compliance of the project with the **principles of ethics**.

The format is divided into several sections.

Human embryonic stem cells (hESCs) and human embryos (hEs)

This section covers projects with activities involving **human embryonic stem cells** (hESCs) and **human embryos** (hEs).

The following activities are **not eligible for EU funding** and therefore cannot be included in the proposals:

- activities aimed at human cloning for reproductive purposes
- activities aimed at modifying the genetic makeup of humans that could make such changes heritable (apart from research related to cancer treatment of the gonads, which can be funded)
- activities aimed at the creation of human embryos exclusively for the purpose of research or procurement of stem cells, including the technique of nuclear transfer of somatic cells
- activities that lead to the destruction of human embryos
- activities involving human stem cells, both adult and embryonic, can be funded, depending on both the content of the scientific proposal and the legal framework of the Member States involved.

No funding will be granted for activities inside or outside the EU which are prohibited in all Member States. No activity will be funded in a Member State where such activity is prohibited.

Please note that all proposals involving the use of hESCs or hEs will undergo an ethical evaluation and, in some cases, also appropriate approval procedures.

Humans

This section refers to projects with **activities involving human beings** who are **not part of the project staff** (beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, subcontractors, etc.). It therefore covers research or study participants, people interested or involved in project activities, regardless of its nature or topic.

Common to all fields, the **main ethical issues** concern:

- respect for people and human dignity
- fair distribution of benefits and burdens
- the rights and interests of the participants
- the need to guarantee the free informed consent of participants (with particular attention to vulnerable categories of individuals such as children, patients, discriminated against, minorities, people unable to give consent, etc.).

Furthermore, the methodologies used should not result in discriminatory practices or unfair treatment.

Human cells or tissues

This section refers to projects with activities that use, produce or harvest **human cells or tissues** (including human fetal or embryonic tissues or cells, other than hESCs).

It is possible to obtain cells or tissues:

- from commercial sources
- as part of this project
- from another project, laboratory or institution
- from a biobank.

Personal Data

This section concerns projects with research activities that involve the **processing of personal data**, regardless of the method used (eg interviews, surveys, questionnaires, direct online retrieval, etc.).

Personal data: Information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person.

An identifiable natural person is a person who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more aspect-specific factors physical, physiological, genetic, psychological, economic, cultural or social identity of this natural person (article 2 (a) EU Regulation 2016/679 (GDPR) on the protection of personal data).

Examples: name, address, identification number, pseudonym, profession, email, CV, location data, Internet Protocol (IP) address, cookie ID, telephone number, data provided by smart meters, data held by a hospital or by a doctor.

Individuals are not considered "identifiable" if identifying them requires excessive effort.

Fully anonymized data does not fall under the data protection regulations (as from the time it has been completely anonymized, the GDPR is not applicable).

Special categories of personal data (formerly known as "sensitive data") – Includes personal data revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs or trade union membership and the processing of genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a natural person, health data or data relating to the sexual life or sexual orientation of a natural person (Article 9 (1), GDPR).

The processing of such data is subject to stricter data protection safeguards. Member States may introduce special derogations / limitations with regard to the processing of genetic, data, biometric and health-related data.

Personal data relating to criminal convictions and offenses – This data may only be processed under the control of official authorities or when the processing is authorized by the law of the Union or of a Member State which provides adequate safeguards for the rights and freedoms of data subjects (Article 10 GDPR).

Processing of personal data – Any operation (or set of operations) performed on personal data, manually or by automatic means. This includes:

- collection (digital audio recording, digital video caption, etc.)
- registration
- organization, structuring and storage (cloud server, LAN or WAN)
- adaptation or alteration (union of sets, appification, etc.)
- retrieval and consultation
- utilization

Animals

This section refers to projects with **research activities involving animals**. Animal welfare is a value of the European Union (Article 13 TFEU). Animals have an intrinsic value that must be respected and treated as sentient creatures.

There is a wide range of EU legislation aimed at ensuring animal welfare and which may be relevant to your projects.

Non-EU countries

This section concerns projects with activities involving **non-EU countries**.

This is the case where:

- the activities are carried out, in whole or in part, in a non-EU country
- the participants or resources come from a non-EU country
- the material is imported or exported to a non-EU country.

Being beyond the reach of European laws and standards, such activities can raise **specific ethical issues** (particularly in developing countries), such as:

- exploitation of participants
- enhancement of local resources
- risks to project teams and staff
- activities (mainly research) prohibited in the EU.

Environment, Health, Safety

This section covers projects with activities that can adversely affect:

- **environment**
- **health** and **safety** of the people involved.

This may be due to one of the following reasons:

- the (experimental) design of the project itself (especially for research projects)
- unwanted side effects of the technologies used.

The health and safety of all human participants must be a priority in all EU projects, especially in projects where the participants may be researchers or uninvolved third parties.

The types of human security risks vary according to the nature of the project, discipline, topic and location. Only the “person in the field” can fully assess the safety issues and / or their willingness to tolerate the risks.

However, both family and unknown settings can lead to additional security problems. Even in family environments, unexpected and non-routine episodes can occur that jeopardize safety.

Furthermore, in some types of projects, the risk of damage to research or other personnel is caused by the activities themselves. Lack of caution or failure to follow standard procedures can cause physical or psychological harm.

Artificial Intelligence

This section concerns projects with activities involving the development, dissemination and / or use of systems or techniques based on **artificial intelligence** (AI).

How an AI solution is implemented or used can change the ethical characteristics of the system. It is therefore important to ensure ethical compliance even in cases where the project does not autonomously develop an AI-based system / technique.

Beneficiaries are strongly encouraged to use the **Assessment List for Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence** (ALTAI) to develop procedures for detecting and assessing the level and addressing potential risks.

Other ethical issues

As many EU programs intend to support innovative activities, it is possible that the project raises **new ethical questions and concerns that are currently not (fully) covered by the standard questions** in the Ethics Issue Table (e.g., new developments in the fields of neurobiology, human-machine interaction, developments in nanotechnology, genetic improvement, creation of androids and cyborgs, etc.).

8.3 Annex 4C (Project Proposal)

Annex 4C contains information for the detailed description of all the elements of the project proposal candidate to receive funding. The document consists of the following sections to be filled in:

- **Abstract**
- **Excellence** (Section a)
- **Impact** (Section b)
- **Quality and efficiency of implementation** (Section c)
- Description of the **Work Packages** (Table 1)

8.4 Annex 5C (Preliminary agreement between Host institution and Applicant)

Annex 5C represents the preliminary agreement between the Applicant and the Italian Host Institution which **must be signed by the parties to proceed with the submission of the application**.

The format provides a first part in which the personal data of the Applicant and the references of the Host institution and its legal representative must be entered.

The second part is made up of 5 articles: Art 1 (General purpose); Art 2 (Obligations of the Applicant); Art. 3 (Obligations of the Host Institution); Art. 4 (Termination of the Agreement); Art. 5 (Claims / Amendments - Other Provisions).

The preliminary agreement after being signed must be uploaded in the attachments section of the platform <https://www.gea.mur.gov.it>.