

Guide for applicants

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1. The essentials

a) What is MCFR?

Marie Curie France Region (MCFR) is a programme co-funded by the European Union. It is based on 6 existing French regional programmes of mobility. MCFR would connect these programmes, which are currently completely independent. Yet they have one common feature: a strong and structural influence over university mobility policies in their respective territories. However, in light of their relatively modest size and their position at the regional level, they cannot benefit from promotion, publicity and recognition outside of France/abroad.

The principle behind this project is to combine the initiative efforts of these regions in favour of the mobility of researchers/fellows and to increase project size. The key points of the programme are:

- A progressive standardization of selection procedures and recruitment, region by region, inspired by the recruitment methods used for MCF
- The standardization and improvement of promotion and communication efforts.
- The significant increase in the number of fellowships, as well as their length, and the improvement of the conditions of mobility
- Reaching out to a large number of universities and of research laboratories all over France
- No research topic is to be excluded a priori

MCFR is managed by the French Rector's Conference (CPU) in association with 14 French regions.

b) Who can apply?

Participants in the MCFR programme must be experienced researchers who want to apply to a mobility scheme: incoming and outgoing. The targeted researchers are postdoctoral and senior researchers.

c) How does it work?

Funding decisions in the MCFR programme are made on the basis of calls published. Applicants who want to apply for an incoming or outgoing mobility must find a host laboratory and define a project that they will have to submit to the MCFR programme coordinator within the specified deadlines. The deadlines are strictly enforced and are absolutely final.

d) How to apply?

This guide contains essential information for applicants to prepare and submit their application to MCFR.

2. General aspects

a) Eligibility criteria

Proposals must fulfil all of the below mentioned eligibility criteria if they are to be retained for evaluation. These criteria are rigorously applied. A proposal can be declared ineligible at any time if it becomes clear that it does not meet the eligibility requirements.

- Proposal must be received before the deadline. Date and time deadlines are published in the call for application.
- Proposals must be complete

Researchers must be experienced researchers who either:

- Are in possession of a doctoral degree OR
 - Have at least four years of full-time equivalent research experience (including the period of research training) after the degree which normally allow them to embark on a doctorate in the country in which the degree was obtained or in the country where the fellowship is taking place
- The proposal must be prepared in cooperation with a host institution; a letter of commitment of the host must be joined to the proposal.
 - The principle of transnational mobility must be

For incoming mobility: experienced researchers (permanent researchers as well as post-docs) from any country of the world

For outgoing mobility: fellowships for researchers working in French research institutions and universities (French citizens or other nationalities) from any country (in Europe or outside Europe)

b) Other conditions

For Post-doctoral level researchers and senior researchers:

- There is no age limit
- They can apply after a career break
- The duration of the fellowship is 12 months
- The research topic will be defined after a discussion between the host laboratory and the applicant In the fellowship scheme, the choice of destination is free and must be in line with the researchers' interest. Research topic is also free, but depending on regional priorities and on host laboratories capacities, this topic choice could be restricted.

All fields of interest to the European Union are eligible, except areas of research covered by the Euratom Treaty. (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/fr/treaties/dat/11957K/tif/11957K.html>)

b) Duration

Fellowship duration is 12 months

c) Activities

The main activity of the MCFR programme is to award fellowships to experienced researchers with an overall objective of training and career development.

The fellowship must include a research project prepared by the research fellow and in coordination with the host organisation.

The proposal should be tailored to the needs of the researcher in order to allow him or her to reach a realistic and well-defined objective in terms of gaining new experience and career advancement (strengthening or attaining a leading independent position...). The project needs must be relevant and the project goals must be measurable, realistic and sufficiently impactful.

The proposal should contribute to develop and widen the researcher competencies (interdisciplinary expertise, inter-sectoral experience, complementary skills...)

All selected fellows will have the same rights and duties as the host staff in the host laboratory.

The researchers have to respect the right for the intellectual property as presented in the directive 2004 / 48 / CE of the European Parliament: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32004L0048:FR:HTML>

d) Remuneration

The estimated salary is:

Post doctoral researchers: (for incoming and outgoing mobility)

Living allowance: 52 000 € per year

Travel allowance: 1 000 € per year

Research contribution: 3 100 € per year

Senior researchers: (for incoming and outgoing mobility)

Living allowance: 108 000 € per year

Travel allowance: 1 000 € per year

Research contribution: 6 200 € per year

e) Host laboratories

Applicants must first find a host laboratory, only they can apply for a mobility scheme. Fellows can apply in Universities and research organisations. The fellow proposal must be in line with the capacity of the laboratory, and the proposal must be accepted by the host organisation. The host laboratory must provide a letter of commitment to the fellow; it is the responsibility of the fellow to ask for this letter of commitment.

f) Material

Universities and research organisations will host the fellows.

So, in terms of office space in laboratories, conditions will depend on host universities and research organisations and disciplines. These conditions will be examined by experts in the evaluation criteria.

In terms of equipment and material, conditions will depend on universities and research organisations, but most of them have large infrastructures, rich databases and libraries, including free access to online publications.

g) Outputs

Fellows' records are expected to improve during their mobility period. Particularly, it concerns publications (including patents) and conference attendance. They will have to participate in different activities such as conferences held by the host institution and seminars, thematic school, conferences organised in other institutions.

In order to allow a transfer of non-scientific skills all the fellows will be involved in the management of their project. Then host institution will have the possibility to offer the fellows multifaceted training such as property rights, communication or ethics...

Each fellow will have to provide a report at the end of their fellowship. The report should highlight the overall results of his / her proposal, ethical issues (if applicable), transferable skills achieved, the impact of the fellowship (on his/her skills and career)...

They will have to provide an evaluation schedule at the end of the fellowship (give their comments on the quality of the host, the training etc). This schedule form will be available on the website or sent by the coordinator to each fellow?

3. How to apply?

a) The applicant

Proposals are submitted in response to call for proposals. The contents and timing of calls are set out in the MCFR website at the following URL address: www.mcfr.cpu.fr

Participants in the MCFR programme must be experienced researchers who want to apply to a mobility scheme: incoming and outgoing. The targeted researchers are postdoctoral and senior researchers

b) Contacts

Helpdesk: people.mcfr@cpu.fr

c) Application requirements

Applicants shall complete the application form attached to each call for proposals

If you have any request concerning your application status you can send your request by e-mail to the MCFR coordinator.

d) Documents to provide

The application form will be available on the website.

A prior declaration sign both by the applicant and the host laboratory will have to be joined to the application declaring that research works will respect the ethical rules of the FP7 programme. The supervisor in the host laboratory will have to provide a letter of commitment in order to ensure that the host laboratory will embark on the project if the applicants' proposal is successful according to the evaluation criteria.

e) Proposal Submission

Application form and all the needed documents will have to be sent before the relevant deadline (see the deadline in the call for application), by e-mail or post at the following addresses: people.mcfrc@cpu.fr or Projet MCFR - 103 boulevard Saint Michel - 75005 PARIS - France

The application must be written in English.

Application must be submitted on PDF format.

The form for application file must be named "applicant name form".

The e-mail object must be named as follow "call reference + applicant name form". It is essential your application carry both your name and the name of the fellowship for which you are applying in order to ensure a proper processing.

f) Deadlines

Applications must be submitted on or before the deadline specified in the call fiche. Call deadlines are absolutely final, so, do not wait the last moment before submitting your application. The deadline is given referring to Paris hour.

g) What happens next?

- **Proposals registration**

All applications are treated in confidence and are not public documents. However information on successful applicants may be used in publications.

The coordinator will sent an acknowledgement of receipt to the e-mail address of the applicant. This message does not imply that the proposal has been accepted as eligible for evaluation. This acknowledgement of receipt contains:

- The date of receipt of the proposal
- Applicant name and host laboratory name and location
- The call reference

Subsequent to submission, the coordinator only makes contact with the applicant if this is necessary to clarify a question.

- **Eligibility checks**

The coordinator will check if the proposal meets the eligibility criteria that apply to this call. Eligibility criteria are checked before the evaluation of proposals by independent experts. Proposals that do not meet the eligibility criteria will not be evaluated (see 2.General aspects)

- **Assessment of applications**

All eligible proposals are subject to a review by independent experts to ensure that only high quality projects are selected for funding. An independent expert is an expert, external to the MCFR programme and to the CPU, who is working in a personal capacity and, in performing the work and does not represent any organisation.

Each eligible proposal will be evaluated by, at least, 3 independent experts.

- **Feedbacks**

After the expert evaluation and selection, each applicant will receive an Evaluation Summary Report giving the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal, as well as scores and experts' recommendations. Proposal will be ranked according to the evaluation results, and the funding decision will be made on the basis of this ranking. Joined to the ESR each applicant will receive an information letter giving a prompt indication of how their proposal fared in the evaluation by experts. They will be communicated to the applicant electronically.

- **Unsuccessful applicants**

Unsuccessful applicants will receive a letter of rejection explaining the reasons for rejection. Host laboratories will be asked to keep the applicants contact and encourage other collaborations. In exceptional cases, host laboratories could find other ways to fund the fellows.

- **Successful applicants**

Successful applicants will receive an acceptance letter with their evaluation summary report and they will have to be in contact with host laboratories to prepare their arrival.

Successful applicants will have to send back to the coordinator the letter of acceptance within 10 days after reception of the notification of success.

If the MCFR coordinator has not heard back from the fellow before that date, the fellowship will be offered to another applicant (A waiting list may be used).

For successful applicants, a work contract will be sign between the applicant and the host laboratory. Applicants are covered by a French contract. These work contracts can start before specific funding is granted to the host institution. Employments conditions will depend on institutions.

h) Can the applicant complain?

Experts decision are final and non negotiable. There is no possibility of redress procedure. Applicants don't have the possibility to complain about experts decisions.

4. Writing your proposal

a) How should the applicant prepare the proposal?

The followings are suggestions to help the applicant:

- Read available information
- Develop relationship with faculty and fellows in the speciality in which you are interested
- Develop your research project thinking of an area of interest for research
- Make your proposal reading by someone else

b) How to write the proposal?

- Read the application form and take it seriously (all the fields are compulsory in the application form)
- Pay attention to the selection criteria
- Write clearly: your proposal has to be clear, well-organized, well-focused and accurate

- Applications must be submitted in English, so use a dictionary: don't rely on your computer spell checker
- Be succinct: in the application form, there is a maximum page limit for each criterion, don't exceed this limit
- Avoid ambiguities: the objectives of the proposal must not be too vague or general; in that case, evaluators will have no way of accurately assessing the feasibility of the proposal
- The proposal must be easy to read: have reasonable margins, break up the text in paragraphs, and avoid long sentences.
- Avoid confusing syntax and jargon, and avoid spelling and grammar errors
- Anticipate questions evaluations could ask during the proposal evaluation
- Spend time to prepare your application
- Make sure that you can meet the objectives of the proposal in the time frame allotted
- Ask a colleague or a mentor to critically review your proposal

c) Writing your proposal

Your proposal must contain the proposal objectives, goals and information on your background and credential...

This proposal must be a persuasive argument for why your project deserves to be funded. That is why your proposal must develop the project importance, the relevance for your career goals, the expected impact of the proposal and that it deserves to be funded.

5. Checklist

a) Preparing your proposal

Are you applying for the right call?

Check that your proposal falls within the scope of this call, and that you are applying for the right action.

Is your proposal eligible?

The eligible criteria are given in this guide. Any proposal that not meet the eligibility requirements will be considered ineligible and will not be evaluated.

Does your proposal follow the required structure?

Proposals should be precise and concise. It must follow the form structure. If you omit requested information, it will certainly lead to lower scores and possible rejection of your proposal.

Have you maximized your chances?

Edit your proposal tightly, strengthen or eliminate weak points. Refer to the evaluation criteria given in annex 2 of this guide. Arrange for your draft to be evaluated by experienced colleagues and use their advice to improve it before submission.

Do you need further advice or support?

You can contact the National Contact point (Helpdesk) or the regional Contact Point for any further information.

b) Final checks before submission

Is your proposal a PDF document?

Is the filename made up of the letters A to Z, and numbers 0 to 9? You should avoid special characters and spaces.

Does your filename correspond to the request from the coordinator?

Does your proposal file within the size limits?

Check that your proposal is complete, printable and readable

Is your proposal written in English?

Annex

Proposal submission form and procedures to be applied for this call.

The evaluation of the proposal is carried out by the French Rectors Conference (Conférence des présidents d'université: CPU) with the assistance of independent experts.

The CPU ensures that the selection process is fair and in line with the European Commission's rules (ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/fp7/docs/erc-evrules_en.pdf).

Experts are expected to be independent, impartial, equitable and objective.

In order to avoid conflicts of interest among experts, they will be asked to sign a declaration of non conflict of interest and they will not be given proposals originating from their own region.

On receipt by the coordinator, proposals are registered. Eligibility criteria will be checked, for each proposal, before the evaluation begins. Proposal which do not fulfil these criteria will not be included in the evaluation process:

- proposal must be complete
- proposal must be submitted before the deadline given in the call fiche

Where a number of maximum pages have been indicated for a section of the proposal, the experts will be instructed to disregard any excessive pages.

Proposal will be evaluated remotely.

Each proposal will first be assessed by at least 3 experts, independently following the criteria mentioned in the application form.

Experts will give evaluation scores for each criterion and not for each sub-criterion.

Each criterion will be scored out of 5; scores are given to one decimal point.

The score indicates the following with respect to the criterion under examination:

- 0: The proposal fails to address the criterion under examination or can't be judged because of missing or incomplete information
- 1: Poor: the criterion is addressed in an inadequate manner, or there are serious inherent weaknesses
- 2: Fair: while the proposal broadly addresses the criterion, there are significant weaknesses
- 3: Good: the proposal addresses the criterion well, although improvements would be necessary
- 4: Very good: the proposal addresses the criterion very well, although certain improvements are still possible
- 5: Excellent: the proposal successfully addresses the relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

Proposals will not be evaluated anonymously.

Explicit and concise justifications will be given for each score. Recommendations for improvements will be given.

No thresholds will be used. The average of the scores will be used to rank proposals.

A waiting list may be used.

In case of any significant difference between scores, the coordinator will organise a mediation procedure by way of a new assessment by another expert, and/or communication between experts.

Decisions will be non negotiable and final. All accepted projects will be funded. Applicants will not have the possibility to complain about evaluation results.