MSCA4Ukraine: Terms of Reference for Applicants (2024 / Call 2)
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1. **Purpose of the Terms of Reference for Applicants**

These terms of reference provide information to potential applicants for an MSCA4Ukraine fellowship (Call 2 / 2024), and a general overview of the scheme and the evaluation and selection processes.

2. **Overview of MSCA4Ukraine**

2.1 **Background & Objectives**

As part of the EU’s response to the Russian Federation’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the dedicated fellowship scheme MSCA4Ukraine was established in 2022 to provide support to displaced researchers from Ukraine. This support enables displaced doctoral and postdoctoral researchers to continue their work at academic and non-academic organisations in EU Member States and Horizon Europe Associated Countries, while maintaining their connections to research and innovation communities in Ukraine. The scheme also aims to facilitate researchers’ reintegration in Ukraine if conditions for safe return are met, in order to prevent permanent brain drain, and contribute to strengthening the Ukrainian university and research sector and its collaboration and exchange with the international research community.

The MSCA4Ukraine scheme is part of the European Commission’s Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions. The budget for the scheme is 35 million euro.

The objectives of MSCA4Ukraine are to:

(a) Ensure swift deployment of a fellowship scheme for researchers from Ukraine;
(b) Reach the widest possible audience with calls for applications and other MSCA4Ukraine activities;
(c) Facilitate access for researchers from Ukraine to MSCA4Ukraine fellowships and other support;
(d) Ensure fair and transparent evaluation and selection processes, aligned with the objectives and principles of the MSCA;
(e) Ensure ongoing career development & networking opportunities for researchers from Ukraine;
(f) Ensure coordination between EU and Ukrainian R & I communities and facilitate reintegration when safe conditions for return are met.

The calls for application, and the selection and evaluation processes under MSCA4Ukraine are developed in line with Horizon Europe standards with respect to transparency, equal treatment and confidentiality, and avoidance of conflict of interest.\(^1\)

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2.2 The Implementing Partners

The MSCA4Ukraine Scheme is implemented by a consortium comprised of Scholars at Risk Europe hosted at Maynooth University, Ireland (project coordinator), the German Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (AvH) and the European University Association (EUA).

The roles and responsibilities of the implementing partners are as follows:

SAR Europe at Maynooth University provides overall coordination for the MSCA4Ukraine scheme, leads the scheme’s advisory and matchmaking services (Call 1 / 2022), career development and networking activities as well as preparations for reintegration, drawing from the experiences of the SAR network which has over 20 years’ experience of direct casework with researchers at risk and a network of over 600 higher education institutions, including over 380 higher education institutions in Europe.

The Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (AvH) organises the MSCA4Ukraine evaluation and selection processes and has primary responsibility for fellowship implementation and monitoring. AvH brings a track record of 70 years creating and managing fellowship and other funding schemes for scholars, such as the Humboldt and the Georg Forster Research Fellowships, the Sofja Kovalevskaja Programme and, since 2015, the Philipp Schwartz Initiative for At-Risk Scholars (PSI). The PSI is one of the most significant funding programmes for researchers at risk in Europe.

The European University Association leads dissemination activities to ensure the widest possible audience for the MSCA4Ukraine calls and the widest possible participation in the scheme’s activities. EUA represents more than 850 universities and national rector’s conferences in 49 European countries.

The French national PAUSE programme, hosted by the Collège de France, and the global Scholars at Risk Network are participating as associated partners, bringing additional valuable expertise and networks to the benefit of researchers from Ukraine.

In addition, an advisory board was established in autumn 2022 to provide strategic advice and overall guidance to the MSCA4Ukraine scheme. The board includes members of the Ukrainian and EU research and innovation communities, and experts in the field of support for researchers at risk.
2.3 About Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) are the European Union’s flagship funding programme for doctoral education and postdoctoral training of researchers. The MSCA fund excellent research and innovation and equip researchers at all stages of their career with new knowledge and skills, through mobility across borders and exposure to different sectors and disciplines. The MSCA help build Europe’s capacity for research and innovation by investing in the long-term careers of excellent researchers. The MSCA also fund the development of doctoral and postdoctoral training programmes and collaborative research projects worldwide. By doing so, they achieve a structuring impact on higher education institutions, research centres and non-academic organisations. The MSCA promote excellence and set standards for high-quality researcher education and training in line with the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the recruitment of researchers.

3. About the MSCA4Ukraine fellowships

Number of fellowships: The final number of fellowships offered under the MSCA4Ukraine scheme will depend on the duration of fellowships awarded and the final distribution of fellowships across EU Member States and Horizon Europe Associated Countries. As a result of the second call for proposals (2024), the partners anticipate awarding around 50 fellowships, in addition to 125 fellowships that were awarded in the first call.

Duration of fellowships: Fellowships will be awarded for a minimum of 6 months, up to a maximum of 24 months. Fellowships are not renewable. Should a doctoral candidate complete their doctoral training while supported by an MSCA4Ukraine grant and defend their PhD thesis, the goal of the grant will be deemed achieved and the grant will be stopped starting from the next month after the award of the PhD degree (by the date on the certificate).

Disciplines: MSCA4Ukraine fellowships are open to all domains of research and innovation.

Location of fellowships: Prospective host organisations established in EU Member States or Horizon Europe Associated Countries\(^2\) are eligible to apply to host researchers under the MSCA4Ukraine scheme. While the standard MSCA mobility rules will not apply to the

\(^2\) For a list of Horizon Europe Associated Countries as at 27 May 2024, see https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-2020-2024/europe-world/international-cooperation/association-horizon-europe_en.
MSCA4Ukraine scheme, the principle of mobility applies, meaning that the primary host organisation (the MSCA4Ukraine applicant) must be outside Ukraine. However, organisations within Ukraine can host researchers for up to one-third of the fellowship duration by negotiating a secondment arrangement with the primary host organisation outside Ukraine. Such arrangements can either be proposed at the time of application, or the arrangement can be proposed once the fellowship is already underway.

**Fellowships rates**: Fellowship rates, i.e. monthly fellowship rates for doctoral and postdoctoral fellowships as well as mobility, family and special needs allowances, if applicable, will be in line with MSCA Doctoral Networks and MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships outlined in the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2021-2022\(^1\). A country correction coefficient (applicable to the country of the primary host organisation), as outlined in the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2021-2022\(^4\), will be applied to the monthly living allowance in order to ensure equal treatment and purchasing power parity across countries for all researchers. Host organisations will receive the same monthly contribution of EUR650 towards institutional management costs, and EUR1,000 towards research, training and networking costs, per fellow, regardless of whether they host doctoral or postdoctoral candidates.

**Application deadlines**: Applications are invited via an online portal that will open for submissions on 5 August 2024. The link to the portal will be available on the MSCA4Ukraine website: [www.sareurope.eu/msca4ukraine](http://www.sareurope.eu/msca4ukraine). Once the portal opens, applications will be accepted until 5 September (23.59h CEST). See section 6.1 for further information.

**Career development**: MSCA4Ukraine includes career development and networking activities over the duration of the fellowship scheme. As part of their application, host organisations must outline training, networking and professional development activities they will provide for the researcher. In addition, the consortium will directly organise networking sessions for MSCA4Ukraine fellows to strengthen their connections with research and innovation communities in Europe and to facilitate maintaining connections to colleagues in Ukraine, especially in cooperation with the Horizon Europe Office in Kyiv, and including in

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coordination with the annual Philipp Schwartz Initiative/Inspireurope+ fora. In consultation with MSCA4Ukraine fellows and host organisations, the consortium will also design and implement a series of career development trainings for researchers from Ukraine.

**Secondments:** A secondment is an optional component of the application and can be up to a third of the fellowship duration. Secondments can still be planned after the fellowship is underway. Secondments can be undertaken in another EU country\(^5\), Horizon Europe Associated Country\(^6\), including within Ukraine, or in third countries\(^7\). This might include, for example, a secondment to a Ukrainian institution for part of the fellowship duration in order to facilitate return to Ukraine if safe conditions are met. Proposals for secondment arrangements must be submitted by the primary host organisation to AvH no later than 60 days before the envisaged start date of the secondment.

**Preparation for reintegration:** While secondments are not required under the scheme, applicant organisations and researchers are strongly encouraged to take measures to support the candidate’s preparation for reintegration into Ukraine, even if such reintegration does not take place within the period of the fellowship. Such preparatory measures might include maintaining or enhancing links to institutions and colleagues in Ukraine through double affiliations, joint supervision of doctoral candidates, or other arrangements with an organisation in Ukraine. Such measures should be outlined in the application. Arrangements should complement, but not conflict with the commitment to the MSCA4Ukraine fellowship.

### 4. Eligibility

#### 4.1. General

MSCA4Ukraine fellowships are open to all domains of research and innovation.

Only one proposal per individual researcher can be submitted. In case of several proposals involving the same individual researcher, only the last submitted one will be considered eligible.

Any individual academic mentor can only support one application. However, an academic mentor of a funded MSCA4Ukraine fellow is not precluded from becoming mentor of a new fellow within the same proposal.

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\(^5\) List of EU Member States available at https://europa.eu/legislation监管/countries-
history/country-profiles\_en.

\(^6\) List of Horizon Europe Associated Countries: https://ec.europa.eu/research-
innovation/en/strategy/strategy-2020-2024/europe-world/international-cooperation/association-
horizon-europe\_en.

\(^7\) Definition of Third Country: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-
migration-network/enn/enn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/third-
country\_en#:%7E:text=Definition(s),%E2%80%9C%20as%20defined%20in%20Art.
applicant.

If proposals with the same research objectives and work plan are submitted on behalf of different candidates, then all of these proposals will be considered ineligible.

Applications must be submitted in English.

4.2 Eligibility criteria for host organisations

Academic or non-academic organisations are eligible to apply for support through MSCA4Ukraine on behalf of one or more researchers meeting the eligibility criteria set out below, except when they are subject to any of the EU restrictive measures.

“Academic organisation” means public or private higher education establishments awarding academic degrees, public or private non-profit research organisations and International European Research Organisations (IERO). “Non-academic organisation” means any socio-economic actor not included in the academic sector and fulfilling the requirements of the Horizon Europe Rules for Participation.

This is a mono-beneficiary action. Applications must be submitted by a single independent legal entity, established in an EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country.

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EU restrictive measures ([https://www.sanctionsmap.eu/#/main](https://www.sanctionsmap.eu/#/main)): Entities subject to EU restrictive measures under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) as well as Article 75 TFEU are not eligible to participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, third parties giving in-kind contributions, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any).

9 If requested, institutions with self-declared research organisations status must provide evidence that their main objective is to carry out research and/or technological development. An assessment will be made on the basis of indicators such as share of research budget, volume of scientific publications and/or registered patents.

10 ‘International European Research Organisation’ (IERO) means an international organisation, the majority of whose members are EU Member States or Horizon Europe Associated Countries, and whose principal objective is to promote scientific and technological cooperation in Europe (cf. regulations establishing Horizon Europe - the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination).


There is a limit of 2 million euro to any one organisation under this scheme, including the funding under the 2022 call.

Organisations located in Ukraine are not eligible to apply as primary host organisations but can host researchers during a secondment arrangement.

Given the illegal invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the involvement of Belarus, there is currently no appropriate context allowing the implementation of any MSCA4Ukraine-related activities with legal entities established in Russia, Belarus, or in non-government controlled territories of Ukraine. Therefore, even where such entities are not subject to EU restrictive measures, such legal entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity\(^\text{13}\).

4.3 Eligibility criteria for researchers

The following eligibility criteria must be met:

(a) Candidates are (1) Ukrainian nationals, or (2) stateless persons, or (3) nationals from third countries other than Ukraine, with their primary residence in Ukraine on 24 February 2022.

(b) Candidates have been displaced from Ukraine on or after 24 February 2022.

(c) Current and former MSCA4Ukraine fellows are not eligible to be nominated.

(d) Candidates are either:

(1) postdoctoral researchers at the date of the call deadline, i.e. in possession of a doctoral degree (PhD or кандидат наук)\(^\text{14}\). Applicants who have successfully defended their doctoral thesis but who have not yet formally been awarded the doctoral degree are considered as postdoctoral researchers and eligible to apply. The successful defence must be unconditional (no further requirements/corrections that need to be addressed) and take place before the call deadline. Supporting documentation may be requested.

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\(^{13}\) Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2025 / “Measures for the protection of the Union budget against breaches of the principles of the rule of law in Hungary” on p.9 (https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2023-2024/wp-13-general-annexes_horizon-2023-2024_en.pdf), and to consult the EU Funding and Tender Portal on https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/support/faq?keywords=Hungary&isExactMatch=true&status=0&frameworkProgramme=43108390&type=0,1&order=DESC&pageNumber=1&pageSize=50&sortBy=publicationDate.

\(^{14}\) A medical doctor degree will be accepted only when it corresponds to a doctoral degree or if the researcher can demonstrate his/her appointment in a position that requires doctoral equivalency (e.g. professorship appointment). 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.
(2) researchers who, on or after 24 February 2022, were enrolled as doctoral candidates at a higher educational institution in Ukraine.

(e) Candidates have the language skills required to successfully conduct their research activities at the envisaged host organisation, as confirmed by the host organisation in the application.

5. Helpdesk

If, after reading these terms of reference for applicants you still have a query in relation to the MSCA4Ukraine scheme, please submit your query via the contact information provided here: https://sareurope.eu/msca4ukraine/contact-msca4ukraine/. Responses to queries will be added on a regular basis to the list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) available to all prospective applicants on the MSCA4Ukraine webpages.

6. How to Apply

6.1 Overview of the Process

Applications are invited via an online portal that will open for submissions on 5 August 2024. The link to the portal will be available on the MSCA4Ukraine website: www.sareurope.eu/msca4ukraine. Once the portal opens, applications will be accepted until 5 September at 23.59h CEST.

6.2 Application requirements

The application must be submitted by the prospective host institution (“the applicant”). For eligibility, please see section 4.2 above.

The applicant organisation will need to appoint a contact point (project management) for AvH during the selection procedure. This person must be employed by the host organisation and provide via the application portal the following documents:

(a) A completed online application form, to include contact details for:
- the candidate (a researcher from Ukraine, including details on their current residence and date of displacement from Ukraine);
- an academic mentor;
- the head of the applying host organisation;
- a contact person for ethics (if applicable);
• the staff member completing the application on behalf of the host organisation who would serve as a contact person for further inquiries, the communication of the award and as liaison for administrative questions during the selection stage.

Furthermore, it includes:
• details on the researcher’s disciplinary area and pre-selection review panel (see section 7.1 below);
• a summary and keywords of the research project;
• details on the type of the programme depending on researcher’s career stage (for doctorate holders or for doctoral candidates);
• details on the proposed fellowship period;
• via the online application form, the confirmation by the applicant institution that it has interviewed the candidate online or in person, that the candidate has the necessary language skills required for the successful implementation of the research project, and the confirmation by the applicant institution of agreement to the terms and conditions of the programme will also be obtained.

(b) Documents to support the eligibility check on the researcher, including:
• an eligibility self-disclosure statement (based on the template provided), including copies of relevant documents (if applicable);
• a full list of publications (if applicable);
• copies of an identity document of the researcher, and of relevant diploma and certificates (for postdoctoral candidates, confirmation of PhD, C. Sc. or equivalent; for doctoral candidates, confirmation that the candidate was enrolled in Ukraine on or after 24 February 2022). Candidates, who are not Ukrainian nationals and who resided in Ukraine (i.e. stateless persons, or nationals of third countries other than Ukraine) must also provide a copy of the document confirming their primary residence in Ukraine on 24 February 2022.

(c) A signed host institution statement on institutional letterhead outlining the support to be provided to the candidate (based on the template provided). The statement should include the following information:
(i) details of the role the researcher will play in the institution, including a confirmation that working space and all other necessary research equipment (such as access to research literature, lab space and other infrastructure) will be provided; profile of the academic mentor, including details on their experience hosting international guest scholars and in particular researchers at risk where applicable;
(ii) details of any secondments envisaged within Ukraine (if safe conditions to conduct such a secondment are met), in another EU country, Horizon Europe Associated Country or other third country, and a confirmation by the host organisation to continue as host institution for the duration of any secondment (including if it is planned later in the course of the fellowship). This might include an envisaged secondment to the Ukrainian home institution for part of the fellowship duration in order to facilitate return if safe conditions for return are met. The secondment is an optional component of the application and can be
up to a third of the fellowship duration. Secondments can still be planned after the fellowship is underway;

(iii) in addition to, or instead of any proposed secondment, details of any measures envisaged during the fellowship to maintain or strengthen the candidate’s connections to research and innovation communities in Ukraine, including measures to prepare for continued affiliation with and future reintegration into Ukraine, should researchers wish to return if safe conditions for such a return are met. Such measures might include cotutelle arrangements (for PhD candidates), double affiliations, joint supervision of doctoral candidates, facilitating continued distance learning, continued distance teaching, or other measures;

(iv) confirmation that the host institution checked documents that pertain to the researcher’s identity, academic record, and that the researcher has the necessary language skills required for the successful implementation of the research project.

(v) confirmation that as the applicant organisation, if successful, the host organisation would act as the employer for the full duration of the MSCA4Ukraine fellowship, including during any secondment undertaken by the candidate in Ukraine or elsewhere. Responsibility for compliance with the funding terms, including any ethical matters and reporting on the progress of the fellowship will lie with the host organisation for the full duration of the fellowship.

(d) An application outline (up to 6 pages, based on the template provided) developed by the candidate including the Research Proposal Outline, providing a concise presentation of the scientific proposal, with particular attention to the originality and ambition of the proposed research project and feasibility of the proposed research approach(es). It should be structured to describe the rationale/ core question(s)/ hypothesis and positioning with regard to the state-of-the-art of the field; scientific research objectives; research methodology and work plan. Nominees must design proposals independently and discuss them with their envisaged academic mentors prior to application; any parts contributed by the academic mentor or others must be attributed accordingly. The application outline should also include Curriculum Vitae and Track Record of the Candidate, listing their research achievements and peer recognition, and a short Motivation Statement on how the stay at the host institution would benefit the researcher and achieve the research objectives.

(e) A full application proposal (up to 11 pages, based on the template provided) developed by the researcher including a more detailed Research Proposal, Curriculum Vitae and Track Record of the Candidate and the Motivational Statement of the Candidate.

(f) A confidential (i.e. not shared with the candidate) statement by the academic mentor (based on the template provided), confirming matching academic specialisations and research interests, assessing the academic profile of the candidate, their academic potential, commitment of the mentor to supporting the candidate and their research, and to avoid nominations based on solidarity alone without adequate attention to academic merit. In addition, it should describe measures aimed at enhancing the career perspectives of the candidate and how these will contribute to their professional skills development, including
details of any training to be offered to the candidate, focused on developing new scientific knowledge through original research. It also should outline any complementary training and professional development activities tailored to the career status of the candidate to be provided to develop key transferable skills and competences common to all fields, foster innovation and entrepreneurship, and promote and (where appropriate) reward Open Science practices, as well as specific measures planned in order to support the candidate in navigating academic and professional challenges and in preparing for opportunities after the funding ends.

(g) Ethical self-assessment form, mirroring the ethics self-assessment form used for EU grants\textsuperscript{15}, and, in cases where a research proposal raises ethical issues, additional ethics-related information.

Translations must be attached for all requested documents that are not in English. Applications must be in English.

In principle, the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as an aid in the application process is permissible. We do not require applicants to identify use\textsuperscript{16}.

7. Evaluation & selection process

7.1 Overview

Subject to the volume of received applications, a single or two-stage evaluation and selection process will be deployed. It is expected that a volume of approximately 3-4-times of the expected number of awards (up to 200 applications) can be processed in a way similar to the first MSCA4Ukraine call for proposals (2022), i.e., through a single-stage evaluation. For a higher volume of applications, a two-stage process will be used:

**Step 1:** Eligibility check, to be conducted by AvH.

**Step 2:** Pre-selection (Stage 1 Evaluation), to be coordinated by AvH and conducted by 10 broad research area-specific Pre-selection review panels, aligned with the MSCA panels, consisting or external experts; aimed to identify top applications to be fully evaluated (Step 3 / Stage 2 Evaluation).


\textsuperscript{16} https://www.humboldt-foundation.de/fileadmin/Bewerben/Allgemein/Managing_generative_AI_Humboldt_Foundation.pdf.
List of panels:

1. **HUM**: Humanities & Arts
2. **SOC**: Social Sciences (including Law)
3. **ECO**: Economic sciences
4. **LIF**: Life Sciences
5. **MED**: Medicine (incl. Veterinary Medicine)
6. **MAT**: Mathematics
7. **CHE**: Chemistry
8. **PHY**: Physics
9. **ENG**: Information Sciences and Engineering
10. **ENV**: Environment and Geosciences

Each application assigned to a Pre-selection review panel, as indicated in the application by the applicant, will be reviewed by at least two panel members. In case of cross-disciplinary applications an additional opinion from a member of a relevant panel may be sought. In case of a 2-stage evaluation process, at the Stage 1, only scores will be collected, and no written reports will be requested from the evaluators. To ensure an approximately similar probability of an application to proceed to the next evaluation stage, a roughly same percentage of the applications from each panel will be moved forward to the next stage, with the overall number of being approximately equal to 3-4-times of the number of awards available. This will also ensure a similar success rate for the first (2022) and the second (2024) calls for applications after the full evaluation. Step 2 will be omitted in the event that only around 200 applications have been received.

**Step 3**: Selection (Stage 2 Evaluation), to be coordinated by AvH and conducted by members of the MSCA4Ukraine pool of evaluators. For the Stage 2 Evaluation, both the scores and written reports will be requested. Should after a reasonable effort (i.e. more than 3 declined requests) it proves impossible to identify three evaluators with relevant expertise who agree to evaluate and provide a review within an expected timeframe of the evaluation, the evaluation result will be based on the submitted reviews of at least two external experts.

**Step 4**: Selection, to be coordinated by AvH and conducted by MSCA4Ukraine selection committee.

**Step 5**: Fellowship offers, to be implemented by AvH.

**Step 6**: Notifications to unsuccessful applicants and referrals to other programmes, to be implemented by SAR Europe.
7.2 Pool of evaluators

The role of evaluators will be to review applications against evaluation criteria set out below. Evaluators will be provided with terms of reference, outlining their duties, code of conduct and estimated time commitment, and will be asked to confirm that no conflict of interest exists, in accordance with AvH’s Conflict of Interest policy\(^{17}\).

Evaluators will be invited from within a large pool of experts of the partner organisations, and from within the MSCA expert pool, on the basis of their:

(a) High level of expertise in one or more fields of research, indicated by peer-reviewed publications, research funding awards, other research accomplishments, OR

(b) Demonstrated understanding of the higher education and research landscape in Ukraine, indicated by affiliations or partnerships with institutions in Ukraine, publications, talks, or other related activities, OR

(c) Experience assisting researchers at risk, based on history of participation in SAR, Philipp Schwartz Initiative, PAUSE programme or other activities to support researchers at risk, OR

(d) Demonstrated understanding of the higher education and research landscape in Europe, indicated by affiliations or partnerships with institutions in Europe, publications, talks, or other related activities.

7.3 Selection Committee

The Selection Committee will include an estimated 10 to 12 individuals (up to 17, if necessary), including established scholars from various academic fields and EU Member States / Horizon Europe Associated Countries, and representatives of organisations experienced in assisting researchers at risk, anticipated to be configured as follows:

(a) 1 Advisory Board member from MSCA4Ukraine as chair;

(b) 3 representatives designated by organisations assisting researchers at risk;

(c) up to 13 academics and other actors independent from the MSCA4Ukraine consortium, at least 2-3 with proven Ukraine expertise.

In case a two-stage evaluation process is implemented, heads of the ten subject-specific Pre-selection panels will also be invited to serve as Selection Committee members.

7.4 Evaluation criteria for selection of researchers

Evaluators will use the criteria set out below when providing scores for each application. The criteria are simplified and adapted from the doctoral and postdoctoral MSCA evaluation

criteria, but with equal weights to excellence and impact, justified by the exceptional
emergency faced by displaced researchers from Ukraine.

Criteria for a two-stage evaluation and selection process:

Stage 1: An application outline (Part 1) together with mentor’s and host organisation’s
statements will be evaluated by members of the relevant Pre-selection review panel (as
indicated by the applicant) against two equally weighted criteria: ‘Excellence’ and ‘Impact’18.
The maximum total score can be between 0-100%.

A. Excellence (50%): Assessment in terms of excellence in creativity, originality, and
potential for advances in knowledge.

Sub-criteria:

A.1 The research proposal: Based on the project’s core questions and approaches please
assess the quality of the research proposal. Is this project excellent in terms of originality,
ambition and feasibility of the proposed research approach? For PhD candidates: Is this project
excellent in terms of the first independent contribution to the relevant academic field?

A.2. The candidate: Based on the candidate’s track record in terms of research outputs and
the peers’ recognition please assess the quality of the candidate’s professional experience,
competences and skills and/or their potential for future research accomplishment. Has the
candidate demonstrated the ability and/or potential to carry out ambitious and original research?
For PhD candidates and early-career researchers19: Is there clear evidence of a starting upward
trajectory/ potential for future research accomplishment?

A3. The match: Based on the information provided, please assess the quality of the scientific
match between the candidate and the mentor (work in similar areas of research, potential
for mutual academic benefit or, alternatively, a void that the candidate/ their research can
successfully fill), including the suitability and quality of the research environment to carry out
proposed research and to support professional development of the candidate.

B. Impact (50%): Assessment of the application in terms of its expected impact.

Sub-criteria:

B.1. Expected impact on the candidate’s professional development. Are the proposed measures
to enhance the career perspectives of the candidate and development of their skills clearly

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19 As an early-career researcher we understand a person who has already gained their PhD, has been active in
research and who has not yet reached the level of Assistant/Associate Professor (or equivalent) or (Junior)
Research Group Leader.
described, credible and of high quality? Are proposed measures and efforts to enhance temporary integration in the host country’s academic community, including, where required, measures to support access for the candidate and their family members to accommodation, medical services, schooling, and other social supports clearly described, credible and of high quality?

B.2. On R&I system of Ukraine: Are the motivation and measures proposed to prepare for reintegration (in the future, probably, beyond the fellowship, when safe conditions for return are met), including efforts to (remotely) maintain and strengthen connections with organisations and researchers in Ukraine while on the fellowship, and/or to foster collaboration with Ukraine credible and of high quality?

Stage 2: Full application proposal (Part 2), together with full list of publications (if applicable), mentor’s and host organisation’s statements, ethics self-assessment form and additional ethics-related information (if applicable) will be evaluated against three criteria: ‘Excellence’ (35%), ‘Impact’ (35%) and ‘Implementation’ (30%). The maximum total score can be between 0-100%.

A. Excellence (35%): Assessment of application in terms of excellence in creativity, originality, and potential for advances in knowledge.

Sub-criteria:

A.1 The research proposal: Based on the project’s core questions and approaches please assess the quality of the research proposal. Is this project excellent in terms of originality, ambition and feasibility of the proposed research approach? For PhD candidates: Is this project excellent in terms of the first independent contribution to the relevant academic field?

A.2. The candidate: Based on the candidate’s track record in terms of research outputs and the peers’ recognition please assess the quality of the candidate’s professional experience, competences and skills and/or their potential for future research accomplishment. Has the candidate demonstrated the ability and/or potential to carry out ambitious and original research? For PhD candidates and early-career researchers: Is there clear evidence of a starting upward trajectory/ potential for future research accomplishment?

B. Impact (35%): Assessment of the application in terms of its expected impact, especially based on the candidate’s motivation statement and the statements of the mentor and of the host organisation. Sub-criteria:

B.1. On the candidate’s professional development: Are the proposed measures to enhance the career perspectives of the candidate and contribute to their skills development clearly described, credible and of high quality? Are proposed measures and efforts to enhance temporary integration in the host country’s academic community, including, where required, measures to support access for the candidate and their family members to accommodation, medical services, schooling, and other social supports clearly described, credible and of high quality?
B.2. On R&I system of Ukraine: Are the motivation and measures proposed to prepare for reintegration (in the future, probably, beyond the fellowship, when safe conditions for return are met), including efforts to (remotely) maintain and strengthen connections with organisations and researchers in Ukraine while on the fellowship, contribute to capacity-building and/or to foster collaboration with Ukraine credible and of high quality?

C. Implementation (30%): Assessment of the application in terms of the quality of its implementation. Sub-criteria:

C.1. The match: Based on the candidate’s and academic mentor’s statements please assess the quality of the scientific match between the candidate and the academic mentor (work in similar areas of research, potential for mutual academic benefit or, alternatively, a void that the candidate/ their research can successfully fill).

C.2. Research environment: Based on the information provided please assess the suitability of the host organisation (departmental strength in the researcher's area), including the operational capacity to support the proposed research (necessary infrastructure, relevant collaborations, etc.) and planned support for professional development of the candidate.

C.3. Credibility and feasibility: Please assess the clarity of the research objectives, quality and effectiveness of the proposed work plan, including assessment of risks and contingency plans. Is the proposed research credible and feasible?

C.4. Duration: Is the proposed fellowship duration suitable in respect to the specific needs and interests of the candidate and to achieve the goals of the proposed research? For PhD candidates: Is the proposed fellowship duration as related to the overall duration of the PhD research and the potential of enhancing the chances of successful conclusions of the PhD research adequately justified?

Each evaluator and the members of the Pre-selection review panels will be requested to evaluate the proposal(s) they are assigned and score the application, taking into account the above criteria which differ slightly depending on the researcher’s career stage, doctoral or postdoctoral researchers. Further rationale with regard to the criteria to be applied is provided below.

**Excellence**: Excellence criteria will be applied in accordance with the career stage of the candidate. Applications for early career researchers and those in the doctorate training stage will be evaluated with a focus on the researcher’s potential for future accomplishments and the feasibility and significance of the research proposal as a first independent contribution to the relevant academic field. Evaluations of applications for experienced researchers in the postdoctoral stage will place a stronger focus on the academic track record of the researcher to date, in addition to their potential to accomplish relevant academic output in the future,
and to the quality and relevance of the research proposal to create relevant impact in the respective field.

**Impact:** Evaluators will review the quality and suitability of the host institution’s and mentor’s plans for individual support and training measures with regard to the specific profile and career stage and the according needs of the nominated researcher. The evaluation will also examine the degree to which the applicant institution takes specific needs of early career and experienced researchers into account and develops a suitable support and training concept.

**Implementation:** Implementation criteria apply to early career and experienced researchers alike, with the exception of the criterion of filling a professional void at the hosting department, which will not be a focus for doctoral candidates.

**Duration:** Applications must explain and substantiate the requested fellowship duration in respect to the specific needs and interests of the nominated researcher, including related training and support concepts. For example, applications for doctoral researchers, would have to demonstrate how this would advance the PhD work, and enhance the chances of its successful conclusions. By way of another example, some institutions may wish to use the MSCA fellowship as a bridging grant to future support forthcoming from the institution. Such plans can be appropriately assessed using the excellence, impact and implementation criteria outlined above. If the duration requested is short-term because, for example, the researcher’s intention is to return to Ukraine after 6 months, it will be important at the application stage to clarify that the brief duration is in the best interest of the researcher, and to demonstrate realistic short-term measures underway or planned to prepare for such reintegration (noted under impact above). Especially if the researcher intends to stay outside Ukraine but no follow-up support or position has been identified at the time of application, the quality and feasibility of the host organisation's plan for supporting the researcher must be demonstrated with a particular focus on mid- to long-term perspectives in the academic system in which the researcher seeks to be integrated (impact). Implementation criteria will apply irrespective of the requested fellowship duration.

7.5 **Scoring & final selection**

Each evaluator will provide a score between 0 (unsatisfactory) and 5 (excellent) for each of the evaluation criteria as a whole. Sub-criteria will help reviewers to decide the scores for each evaluation criterion. In addition to assigning a score, in Stage 2, evaluators will be requested to provide brief comments highlighting strengths and weaknesses of applications. Each full evaluation will yield an overall score between 0 (unsatisfactory) and 15 (100%)
In order to proceed to the selection stage, an application must meet a minimum threshold of 3.5 points per criterion and 10.5 (out of 15) points overall, i.e. 70%. In general, the individual scores provided by three evaluators will be averaged to reach a final score per application. Should after a reasonable effort (i.e. more than three declined requests) it proves impossible to identify three evaluators with relevant expertise who agree to evaluate and provide a review within an expected timeframe of the evaluation, the evaluation result will be based on the submitted reviews of at least two external experts. If the scores for one application are highly divergent, an additional evaluator will be invited to score the application. Given the urgency of the need facing researchers from Ukraine, interviews with applicant organisations and/or researchers are not envisaged. For the Pre-selection stage of Call 2 (Stage 1 Evaluation), should a two-stage evaluation process be implemented, only scores will be collected, and no written reports will be requested. Each application assigned to a Pre-selection review panel will be reviewed by at least two panel members. The average scores will form a basis for the ranking of the applications, submitted to the respective panel. Panel members may decide to discuss certain applications close to the cut-off and adjust the scores/establish a new ranking for the discussed cases before finalising the ranking list. Scores of the Stage 1 evaluation will only serve as a basis for the decision on which top applications will proceed to the full evaluation (Stage 2) and will not be disclosed to the applicants. However, the ranking list of the applications submitted to each Panel may be made available.

A consolidated evaluation report after the full evaluation (Stage 2 in case of a two-stage evaluation process) can be provided upon request submitted within 11 months of the receipt of the result of their fellowship application evaluation result. No scores will be communicated after the Stage 1 evaluation to unsuccessful applicants.

7.6 Redress procedure

Applicants will be informed of the selections results per email, informing them on the result of the admissibility/eligibility check and, if deemed admissible/eligible, the outcome of the evaluation. In case of a two-stage evaluation process, applicants will first be notified on the outcome of Stage 1 of the evaluation, informing them on the result of the admissibility/eligibility check and either that the application is shortlisted for Stage 2 of the evaluation, or that it is unsuccessful. Subsequently, the shortlisted applicants will be informed on the results of the full evaluation (Stage 2).

Applicants who believe their proposal has been unjustly evaluated may submit a request for redress.

Applicants may submit a request for redress if they:

• believe the result of the admissibility/eligibility check is incorrect;
consider that there has been a shortcoming in the way their proposal was assessed that may have affected the outcome of the pre-selection assessment (Stage 1 Evaluation) or full evaluation (Stage 2 Evaluation).

Requests for redress can only be based on procedural grounds (i.e., factual errors, a deficiency in the way the eligibility check and/or evaluation processes were conducted, the existence of a conflict of interests, etc.), not on the merits of the application. Mere repetitions of the content of the proposal or disagreements with the result or reasoning of the pre-selection review panels and/or the assessment performed by individual independent expert evaluators will not be considered.

The MSCA4Ukraine team, for redress requests following the pre-selection (Stage 1), or an Appeals and Redress Committee, for redress requests following the full evaluation (Stage 2), will review the request and the applicant organisation will be informed within 15 days of the deadline for submitting the redress requests if their redress request is accepted. If accepted, a redress evaluation will be conducted, and applicants will receive the redress outcome within 5 working days of its completion. For the applications rejected after the pre-selection stage, any redress enquiries will be proved for absence of any formal mistakes. Decisions made by the MSCA4Ukraine team or the Appeals and Redress Committee, respectively, are final.

Requests have to comply with the following requirements:

• The request for redress can only be related to the evaluation process, admissibility or eligibility checks;
• It clearly states the name of the host organisation (the applicant), the application ID Number (as communicated in the result notification letter after the full evaluation (Stage 2)), pre-selection review panel, and a clear description of the grounds for complaint;
• Requests for redress can be submitted within 10 days of receipt of the official result after the pre-selection assessment (Stage 1 Evaluation) or within 20 days after the full evaluation (Stage 2 Evaluation). After this period, no redress requests will be accepted.
• It must be sent by the project management, nominated by the host organisation (the applicant).
• Only one request for redress per application will be considered.
• The request cannot refer to the evaluation of proposals submitted by other applicants or under the previous call.

Requests for redress will not be considered if they do not comply with the above requirements.

Requests for redress will not always necessarily also lead to a re-evaluation of the application. A re-evaluation will be decided only if the complaint demonstrates that the procedural irregularity, factual error, manifest error of assessment or abuse of powers affected the decision of either Stage 1 or Stage 2 evaluation. Thus, for example, a problem relating to one of the evaluation criteria will not lead to a re-evaluation if, even by adding the maximum points under this criterion, the final score of the application would still remain below the
cut-off for either progressing to the Stage 2 evaluation or to be selected for funding.

Re-evaluations will be made on the application as it was originally submitted; no additional information will be admitted. Re-evaluations may be partial (limited to the criterion affected by the error) or full (when the whole evaluation has been recognised as flawed), depending on the case.

The evaluation score following any re-evaluation will be regarded as definitive. The score following a re-evaluation may be lower than the original score.

All requests for redress will be treated as confidential.

8. Ethical issues

All funded research projects must comply with national and EU ethics regulations for research. Applicants must always consider and address any of the following ethics issues, if they arise, in their proposals:

(a) Humans
(b) Human cells/tissues
(c) Personal data
(d) Animals
(e) Third countries
(f) Environment & Health and Safety
(g) Dual use
(h) Misuse
(i) Other ethics issues

Research areas excluded from funding include:

(a) Research activities aiming at human cloning for reproductive purposes.
(b) Research activities intended to modify the genetic heritages of human beings which could make such changes heritable (research related to cancer treatment of the gonads may be exempt from this stipulation).
(c) Research activities intended to create human embryos solely for the purposes of research or for the purpose of stem cell procurement, including by means of somatic cell nuclear transfer.
(d) Research activities involving human embryonic stem cells.
All applicants to the MSCA4Ukraine fellowship scheme are required to complete an Ethics Self-Assessment, submitted together with the online application form. For more information on ethical issues please refer to the European Commission’s guide EU Grants: How to Complete your Ethics Self-Assessment20.

If ethics issues are identified in the form, the applicant host organisation must then complete a more detailed assessment together with the candidate, in order to identify which formal ethics approvals might be needed. For example, a written confirmation of compliance with relevant national regulations issued by a relevant internal or national body may be needed. The self-assessment will include a confirmation by the applicant organisation that the project will follow relevant ethics laws and requirements and will specify which types of ethics approvals will need to be obtained. Full formal ethics approval is not needed at the application stage.

Host organisations are required to identify a contact person for ethics as part of their application if any ethically-relevant issues have been identified. This could be, for example, the academic mentor, a member of the administrative staff, or another staff member with knowledge of ethics procedures in the host country. This person will be responsible for writing the ethics statement at the application stage and will serve as a contact person between the candidate, the applicant host organisation and the MSCA4Ukraine programme management team. The host organisation’s ethics contact person will be responsible for obtaining formal ethics approval and informing the fellow and AvH about such approvals during the funding stage.

Additional issues (including Third countries, Environment & Health and Safety, Dual use and Security-relevant research in international research collaborations21, Misuse and Rules of Good Scientific Practice22) may be identified during the evaluation process by any expert reviewer, or during the execution of a project by anyone involved.

9. Grant agreements with host organisations

AvH will award MSCA4Ukraine grants to the host organisation and enter into an agreement with each successful applicant host organisation and each host organisation will provide an employment or, in exceptional cases (section 9.1), a ‘fixed amount fellowship’ contract to the fellow they will host. Agreements between AvH and host organisations will be based on the Award letter and MSCA4Ukraine Terms of Reference for Grantees (please see here the

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current Terms\(^{23}\)) and may also address ethical requirements, data management and open access obligations.

9.1 Appointment conditions for researchers

The agreement between host organisation and AvH will specify that working conditions for the MSCA4Ukraine Fellow must be in line with the European Charter for Researchers\(^{24}\). The agreement will specify that doctoral and postdoctoral researchers will be recruited under employment contracts under the relevant national legislation in the organisation’s host country, including the social security coverage and social benefits. All host organisations in endorsing the European Charter for Researchers indicate that they work in line with the non-discrimination principles included in the Charter.

In cases where legislation prevents the provision of an employment contract for this purpose, a ‘fixed amount fellowship’ can exceptionally be provided subject to prior agreement of the granting authority. In this case, the living allowance will be halved and the host organisation must ensure that the candidate enjoys full social security coverage (including sickness, parental and invalidity benefits, benefits for accidents at work and occupational diseases, and pension contributions).

9.2 Financial Aspects

Fellowship amounts for doctoral candidates and postdoctoral fellowships as well as mobility, family and special needs allowances, if applicable, will be the rates used in MSCA Doctoral Networks and MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships as specified in the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2021-2022, respectively.\(^{25}\) A country correction coefficient (applicable to the country of the primary host organisation), as specified in the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2021-2022, will be applied to the monthly living allowance in order to ensure equal treatment and purchasing power parity across countries for all researchers.\(^{26}\)

Host organisations will receive the same monthly contribution of EUR650 towards institutional management costs, and EUR1,000 towards research, training and networking costs, per fellow, regardless of whether they host doctoral or postdoctoral fellows, and a country correction coefficient shall be applied to the living allowance. Members of the


candidate’s family will be appropriately supported through the fellowship via a family allowance. As noted in the evaluation criteria (section 8.4) host organisations must include in their applications plans to support access for candidates and family members to accommodation, medical services, schooling and other social supports.

AvH will transfer funds related to the researcher unit costs and institutional unit costs to the host organisations employing the fellows. The host organisations will be responsible for paying the researchers their living allowance, mobility allowance, family allowance (if applicable) and special needs allowance (if applicable). Unspent funds from institutional unit contributions must be used for the benefit of the researchers in agreement with AvH. In line with MSCA rules, research, training and networking contributions should only be used to support the professional development of the fellow.

The host organisation will be required to continue paying the above funds during any secondments that the candidate undertakes, including any secondments in Ukraine.

The host organisation must ensure open access to peer-reviewed scientific publications relating to the fellow’s research results unless it goes against the legitimate interests of the fellow and/or the host organisation.

9.3 Career development and other benefits

In order to equip MSCA4Ukraine fellows with skills that enhance and expand their career opportunities inside and outside academia, applications from host organisations will be required to outline training and career development opportunities they will provide to the researcher.

Within the first two months of the fellowship, a career development plan should be prepared jointly by the academic mentor and the researcher. The plan should outline the researcher’s training and career needs, including, for example, training on transferable skills, teaching, planning for publications and participation in conferences and events.

Additional networking and career development opportunities will be developed by SAR Europe, hosted by Maynooth University and all MSCA4Ukraine fellows will be invited to participate.

10. Frequently Asked Questions

Responses to frequently asked questions are available at https://sareurope.eu/msca4ukraine/faqs-msca4ukraine/. This page will be regularly updated as new questions arise.
11. Relevant Links

European Charter for Researchers:
https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/charter/european-charter

Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers:
https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/charter/code

EU Grants: How to complete your ethics self-assessment:

Horizon Europe Work Programme 2021-2022:

*MSCA financial rates for postdoctoral and doctoral candidates available at pp. 75 and 83 of above Horizon Europe Work Programme 2021-2022, Table 1 “country correction coefficients” is available from pp. 105.*

12. Contact details

Please review this guide for applicants and the FAQs (https://sareurope.eu/msca4ukraine/faqs-msca4ukraine/) before submitting a query to the MSCA4Ukraine team.

Website: www.sareurope.eu/msca4ukraine

Contact us: https://sareurope.eu/msca4ukraine/contact-msca4ukraine/

Join the MSCA4Ukraine email list: https://sareurope.eu/msca4ukraine/contact-msca4ukraine/