

Contractual rights and obligations of the Doctoral Candidates under MSCA COFUND Projects

When pursuing a PhD under a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) COFUND program, doctoral candidates (DCs) have specific contractual obligations that stem from both the MSCA program rules and the individual contract with their employer.

Key obligations:

✓ Employment and Social Security

- **Employment Contract:** Doctoral candidates must be recruited under an **employment contract** by the recruiting university. This contract must provide **full social security coverage**.
- **Full-Time Commitment:** Doctoral researchers are expected to dedicate **full-time** effort to their research project. Part-time work may be permitted under specific circumstances (e.g., personal or family reasons), but this requires prior agreement from the Research Executive Agency (REA).

✓ Mobility Rule

- **International Mobility:** A fundamental requirement of MSCA is mobility. Doctoral candidates **must not** have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in the country of the recruiting university for more than **12 months in the 36 months immediately preceding the deadline of the co-funded program's call**. This rule is crucial for fostering international collaboration and knowledge transfer.

✓ Doctoral Program Enrollment

- **PhD Enrollment:** The successful doctoral candidate will be enrolled in a PhD program that leads to the award of a doctoral degree in at least one EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country.

✓ Research and Training Obligations

- **Dedicated Research:** The primary responsibility is to conduct the research outlined in the approved project proposal and the DCs PCDP.

- **Training and Career Development:** COFUND programs emphasize comprehensive training. Doctoral candidates are obliged to actively participate in various training activities, including:
 - **Research-specific training:** Enhancing their scientific knowledge and technical skills related to their specific project.
 - **5 Transferable skills training:** Developing a broad range of skills relevant for various career paths (e.g., communication, project management, entrepreneurship, data management, open science).
 - **Organisation/attendance to yearly summer schools:** DCs will organise one summer school in their recruiting university and have the obligation to attend all summer schools
- **Personal Career Development Plan (PCDP):** A personalised PCDP will be established collaboratively between the supervisor(s) and the doctoral candidate upon recruitment. This plan should outline research objectives, training needs, publication plans, and participation in conferences and other events. The PCDP will be annually updated and sent to the Project Manager.

✓ **Secondments**

- **Intersectoral Mobility:** Many COFUND programs require doctoral candidates to undertake **secondments** (temporary placements) with academic and non-academic partners. DCs will undertake at least one secondment to another discipline or sector of at least 3 months and up to 12 months and they will be encouraged to take part in any kind of valuable training events by the secondment hosts as well, in line with their personal career development plan. Secondment duration and place will be organised during the first year with the support of the individual supervisor.

✓ **Ethics and Research Integrity**

- **Adherence to Principles:** Doctoral candidates are required to adhere to the highest standards of research ethics and integrity, complying with the [European code of conduct for research integrity](#).

✓ **Reporting and Dissemination**

- **Reporting Contributions:** Doctoral candidates are asked to contribute to the progress reports submitted by the Coordinator to the European Commission through the PCDP.
- **Dissemination and Communication:** Doctoral candidates must actively participate in disseminating their research results, promoting open science practices, and engaging with the public like:
 - 2 high-level publications over the course of their fellowship
 - Active contribution to at least one communication/outreach/citizen science measure per year

- At least one blog entry over the course of their fellowship

✓ **Collaboration and Supervision**

- **Active Collaboration:** While supervision is largely the responsibility of the recruiting university and the appointed supervisors, the doctoral candidate also has an obligation to actively collaborate with their supervisors, provide regular updates on their progress, and communicate any issues or challenges promptly.

✓ **Doctoral Candidates support**

- As an MSCA researcher, you are also eligible to join [the Marie Curie Alumni Association \(MCAA\)](#).
- In case you need any further clarification with regard to any of the aspects of your fellowship, you can also contact any of the [MSCA National Contact Points \(NCP\)](#)
- [EURAXESS](#) : The leading portal for the research community

Specific details of these obligations will be outlined in the employment contract and the Gen-Q Grant Agreement