

Two NCP Positions funded by the Irish Research Council in partnership with the Irish Universities Association

- ❖ **National Contact Point for Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA)**
- ❖ **National Contact Point for European Research Council (ERC) (SSH panels)
and Cluster 2 (Culture, creativity and inclusive society, including related
missions and partnerships)**

The Irish Universities Association works in partnership with the Irish Research Council in the operation of the Irish Marie Skłodowska-Curie Office (IMSCO) which holds the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) National Contact Point (NCP) and National Delegate roles for Ireland in Horizon Europe.

Funding has recently been secured from the IRC for an additional NCP for MSCA for Ireland to work in the IMSCO until the end of 2024, supporting the Head of the IMSCO (MSCA National Delegate (ND) & NCP) and focusing on broadening Irish participation levels among underrepresented groups in MSCA.

Additionally, the IRC is the national support agency for Horizon Europe Cluster 2 (Culture, creativity and inclusive society, including related missions and partnerships) and joint NCP for ERC (SSH panels). Funding has now been secured to put in place one full-time post within the IUA to carry out on behalf of the IRC the dual roles (ERC NCP/Cluster 2 NCP) for an initial two-year period.

Background and Overview of Roles

The Irish Universities Association (IUA) is the representative body of the university sector, supporting our members in developing sectoral policies and strategies. The IUA also provides shared services in researcher mobility, engagement, access and internationalisation across the higher education sector.

The Irish Research Council supports excellence in research talent, knowledge and engagement. It operates multi-million-euro research funding initiatives, which support talented researchers across all disciplines and career stages. The IRC mandate covers all disciplines and career stages and is the key source of funding for researchers in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. The Council also proactively supports the development of interdisciplinary research in Ireland, boosting our capacity to address complex and multi-faceted societal challenges. The IRC plays a key role in the research landscape in developing researchers who will be successful in European research funding framework programmes, in particular within the Excellent Science and Challenge-orientated pillars.

The NCP roles funded by the IRC are thus intertwined with the national mandate of the IRC and inform the development of the IRC's activities and overall mission.

Since 2012, the IUA has partnered with the Irish Research Council (IRC) in the operation of the IMSCO, hosted at the IUA premises in Merrion Square, Dublin. This successful partnership has contributed to more than €195 million of funding coming in to Ireland from MSCA under Horizon 2020, the European Commission's 8th Framework Programme. It is the area of highest drawdown for Ireland under Horizon 2020 with ERC Ireland's second highest area for Horizon 2020 drawdown.

Horizon Europe, the EU's new funding programme for research and innovation, will run from 2021 to 2027 and will promote collaborative and cutting-edge research across Europe. Excellent Science, including MSCA and ERC, remains a core element within the framework which retains the challenge-orientated approach in the form of six clusters, of which Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society is one. Work Programmes for MSCA, ERC and each Cluster are developed by the Commission in cooperation with member states (including via Programme Committees comprising National Delegates/National Experts).

The launch of Horizon Europe (2021-27) provides great opportunities for Ireland to build on our success to date. These two newly created NCP roles will be integral to Ireland's future success in Europe's largest Framework Programme.

Position 1

National Contact Point (NCP) for Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA)

The IMSCO supports access by Irish higher education, public and private sector organisations to the MSCA under Horizon Europe and supports applicants in preparing competitive funding proposals to MSCA Calls. Ireland's success in MSCA has presented the opportunity to extend participation levels across sectors (universities, TUs, IoTs, enterprise, civil society), across disciplines (AHSS, STEM) and across the range of Actions within MSCA. Funding has been secured for a Programme Manager to further enhance the capacity the IMSCO in building on Ireland's success and expanding participation levels. The IUA wishes to appoint a suitably qualified and experienced person to take up the position of NCP for MSCA.

Job Specification and Key Responsibilities & Deliverables

Reporting to the Head of the IMSCO, this additional MSCA NCP will provide a "conception to completion" service for the Irish research community for the entire Marie Skłodowska-Curie process from a researcher initially receiving information about the programme, through to proposal submission, contract negotiation and implementation. There will be a particular focus on increasing participation levels in those sectors underrepresented in Horizon 2020, in particular the technological higher education sector, enterprise, and researchers working in Arts, Humanities and Social Science disciplines (AHSS).

The NCP will adhere to the minimum standard and guiding principles for that role as set down by the European Commission.¹ Reporting to the Head of the Irish Marie Skłodowska-Curie Office, the key functions of this newly appointed, additional MSCA NCP will include:

A. To support Attainment of national objectives for MSCA

To achieve this, the additional MSCA NCP will...

- Support the Head of Office in the delivery of IMSCO services and attainment of goals including the contribution of MSCA to the national Horizon Europe funding target;
- Gather, analyse and pro-actively use data on the Horizon Europe MSCA to increase successful Irish participation;
- Liaise with other NCPs, funding agencies etc. to ensure dissemination and added value to researchers engaged in other Horizon Europe programmes;

B. To support Ireland's Research Performing Organisations (RPOs) and current, future and potential applicants to MSCA

- To achieve this, the additional MSCA NCP will...Engage regularly with the research offices/funding managers within RPOs to encourage participation in MSCA, particularly those sectors underrepresented in Horizon 2020.
- Provide support to RPOs as they develop and implement their own plans/strategies around increasing MSCA engagement.
- Provide high-level support to potential applicants on how to develop competitive MSCA proposals;
- Provide scheme-specific training and workshops to applicants on all MSC Actions, prior to key deadlines, contributing to a suite of support programmes including webinars, "Train the Trainer" workshops, support documents/handbooks and dedicated proposal-writing workshops;
- Assist with the IMSCO's proposal pre-evaluation service with feedback to proposals submitted in a timely manner;
- Provide timely advice and analysis to applicants on the outcome of the evaluation process;
- Advise applicants with rejected proposals on their evaluation results and how to proceed with redress or resubmission;
- Advise successful applicants during the implementation phase of the project;
- Respond to general and detailed queries relating to MSCA in partnership with the Head of Office;

C. To promote MSCA to increase participation

To achieve this, the additional MSCA NCP will...

- Promote MSCA nationally and internationally in partnership with the Head of Office;
- Increase awareness and participation of the MSCA in the technological higher education sector, engaging with relevant institutions and with the Technological Higher Education Association;

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/support/20131125_NCP%20Minimum%20standards.pdf

- Increase awareness and participation of the MSCA in the Enterprise Sector by linking with the promotional mechanisms of State Agencies to multiply the message, particularly IDA and EI.
- Highlight the importance of intersectoral collaboration in MSCA projects;
- Ensure optimal uptake of COFUND (co-financing doctoral and post-doctoral fellowship programmes) and offer comprehensive individualised support to applicants;

D. Training & Mobility

- To achieve this, the additional MSCA NCP will...Support the Head of Office with the NET4MOBILITY+i project, an EU project for MSCA National Contact Points;
- Work closely with the EURAXESS Ireland office based in the IUA which provides advice and assistance to researchers and on mobility issues.

Candidate Skills and Attributes

This is a role which requires a hands-on approach to the achievement of results based on the skillset below:

Essential:

- A primary degree and at minimum three years' experience in a research funder, research support or research administration role;
- Significant experience in EU R&D funding, including writing/editing funding proposals to EU calls;
- Exceptional communication skills, particularly the ability to confidently present to large audiences;
- Excellent interpersonal skills, judgement, and ability to work calmly under pressure, particularly when engaging with external stakeholders;
- Results focused and a self-starter;
- Ability to analyse data and prepare statistical reports;
- Understanding of research eco-system and European framework programmes.

Desirable:

- A track record in EU funding opportunity identification, proposal definition and review;
- Previous experience of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions/Framework Programmes;
- Experience of liaising with enterprise or civil society organisations in regards to research projects, and the issues which may arise (including Intellectual Property);
- Experience of liaising with the technological higher education sector;
- Knowledge of the contractual requirements and implementation of Horizon 2020/Europe awards;
- Previous experience of working within and/or liaising with EU networks;
- An awareness of using social media for business.
- Experience of liaising with a broad range of stakeholders and the research community;

Position 2

Dual National Contact Point (NCP) for ERC (SSH Panel) and Cluster 2

Ireland's engagement in Horizon Europe is coordinated by Enterprise Ireland (EI) via a national network comprising the NCPs and National Delegates for the various elements of the framework programme. NCPs lead on their respective areas within the network whilst also representing their host organisation. The Council is responsible for the provision of the National Contact Point (NCP) for ERC (SSH panels) and for the NCP for Cluster 2 (Culture, creativity, and inclusive society), including related missions and partnerships. The Council also holds the National Expert role for ERC and the National Delegate role for Cluster 2. The IRC has entered into an agreement with the Irish Universities Association to host the ERC / Cluster 2 NCP officer for a period of 2 years and support the provision of service on behalf of the IRC across the national research system.

Given alignment between ERC and MSCA under Pillar 1 and the cross-cutting issues that feature in Horizon Europe, the NCP will report to the Head of the Irish Marie Skłodowska-Curie Office while working closely with and under the guidance of the National Delegate/National Expert for Cluster 2/ERC in the IRC. The IUA wishes to appoint a suitably qualified and experienced person to take up the position of NCP for ERC (SSH Panel) and Cluster 2 (Culture, creativity and inclusive society, including related missions and partnerships).

Job Specification and Key Responsibilities & Deliverables

The NCP will promote awareness of ERC and Cluster 2 work programmes amongst researchers in Ireland and will support host institutions in their promotion of opportunities available. Networking at national and EU level will be part of the NCP's role. The role also includes responsibility for working with the national NCP network to promote and support SSH integration across Horizon Europe work programmes. In undertaking this role, the NCP will support researchers across the entire higher education sector in Ireland, including the technological higher education sector.

The ERC (SSH) and Cluster 2 NCP will adhere to the minimum standard and guiding principles for that role as set down by the European Commission.² Key functions will include:

A. To support Ireland's current, potential & future applicants to ERC (SSH) & Cluster 2

To achieve this, the NCP will...

- Promote the ERC (SSH) and Cluster 2 work programmes amongst researchers in Ireland and support host institutions in their promotion of opportunities available, raising awareness and participation levels in each.
- Engage regularly with the Research Offices within research performing organisations to encourage participation in ERC (SSH) and Cluster 2, responding to queries and requests for information.

² http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/support/20131125_NCP%20Minimum%20standards.pdf

- Provide support to research performing organisations and to applicants, communicating information and advice and assisting them as they develop and implement their own plans/strategies around increasing ERC and Cluster 2 engagement.
- Provide support to potential applicants on how to develop competitive ERC proposals and Cluster 2 proposals.
- Provide timely, specific training and workshops to applicants on ERC and Cluster 2, including organising 'mock' interviews for Irish-based ERC (SSH) applicants, delivering webinars, and coordinating participation in the ERC Mentoring Initiative.
- Provide timely advice and analysis to applicants on the outcome of the evaluation process.
- Advise applicants with rejected proposals on their evaluation results and how to proceed with redress or resubmission.
- Advise successful applicants during the implementation phase of their projects.
- Respond to general and detailed queries relating to ERC and Cluster 2 in consultation with the National Delegate/National Expert for Cluster 2/ERC.
- Review applications for Enterprise Ireland support funding.
- Promote opportunities for SSH integration across Horizon Europe work programmes, working with other NCPs in Ireland and internationally.

B. To support the attainment of national objectives for ERC and Cluster 2

To achieve this, the NCP will...

- Work closely with the ERC National Expert (in the Council), and in collaboration with the ERC National Delegate and other ERC NCP (in Science Foundation Ireland), to develop a national strategy to increase the quantity and quality of ERC submissions from Ireland.
- Assist the National Delegate for Cluster 2 in consulting with the research and stakeholder community in respect of work programmes.
- Work with the national NCP network coordinated by Enterprise Ireland, including attending NCP networking meetings
- Undertake systematic analysis of data on Ireland's engagement in ERC and Cluster 2 and reporting on same to the Council and to other stakeholders as necessary (e.g. Department of Further & Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science).
- Provide regular reports to the Council Executive and Board on ERC and Cluster 2 activities, performance, and developments.
- Collaborate with the ERC NCP for the physical and life sciences, based at Science Foundation Ireland.
- Work with colleagues in the Council on training and development measures for its awardees to enhance engagement with ERC and Cluster 2 funding opportunities
- Work with colleagues in the Council on a unified communication strategy that maintains information resources and promotes engagement.

C. To develop role-specific expertise and strategic relationships

To achieve this, the NCP will...

- Engage with EU-wide NCP support and capacity-building measures and building relationships with NCP equivalents in other member states.
- Undertake relevant NCP training.
- Work with the national NCP network to promote and support SSH integration across Horizon Europe work programmes.
- Advise government on developments in ERC and Cluster 2 or assist the Irish Research Council in doing so.
- Keep up to date with national and EU policy developments in areas that pertain to success in ERC and Cluster 2, such as the Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) Agenda, including research integrity, open data, and gender issues in research.

Candidate Skills and Attributes

This is a role which requires a hands-on approach to the achievement of results based on the skillset below:

Essential:

- A primary degree and at minimum three years' experience in a research funder, research support or research administration role;
- Exceptional communication skills, particularly the ability to confidently present to large audiences and engage with senior academics;
- Excellent interpersonal skills, judgement, and ability to work calmly under pressure, particularly when engaging with external stakeholders;
- Demonstrable networking and relationship-building skills
- Strongly orientated to collaboration and team-working with demonstrable capacity to work independently
- Ability to analyse data and prepare detailed reports.
- Understanding of research eco-system, European framework programmes and research policy

Desirable:

- A track record in EU funding opportunity identification, proposal definition and review;
- PhD and/or research experience in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities;
- Knowledge of the contractual requirements and implementation of Horizon 2020/Europe awards;
- Previous experience of working within and/or liaising with EU networks;
- An awareness of using social media for business.
- Experience of liaising with a broad range of stakeholders and the research community;

The EU Commission requires that any conflicts of interest arising for NCPs are managed appropriately and further information is provided in the Commission guidance on Horizon Europe NCPs.

Contract details

The positions of NCP for MSCA and NCP for ERC/Cluster 2 will ordinarily be based at the IUA (in line with public health guidelines in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic) with some capacity for remote working. The MSCA NCP role is offered on a fixed term contract up to 31st December 2024, and the ERC/Cluster 2 NCP role is offered on a fixed term contract up to 30th September 2023. Both roles are subject to a period of probation and meeting on-going performance requirements. Both roles will require domestic travel within Ireland on a regular basis, when possible, with European travel also required as appropriate.

Salary in the region of €50,000 commensurate with experience will be offered. A secondment arrangement for existing public-sector employees may be possible, subject to concluding an appropriate agreement between the IUA and the candidate's current employer.

Application Details

Please forward a detailed but concise CV and cover letter (max 500 words), demonstrating the competencies and experience listed above, by email by CoB **Monday 16th August 2021** to: marguerita.lardner@iua.ie

Tel. 01 6764948

Subject to panel availability, interviews will be scheduled for the week commencing 23rd August 2021.

Applications submitted by or through third parties, including recruitment agencies, will be rejected.

The IUA is an equal opportunities employer.
