

National Contact Point for Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) funded by the Irish Research Council in partnership with the Irish Universities Association

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, in particular the technological higher education sector, civil society and enterprise.

Background and Overview of the Role

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 activities of the IMSCO 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 €196 million of funding coming into 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.

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. The launch of Horizon Europe (2021-27) provides great opportunities for Ireland to build on our success to date.

This newly created NCP role will be integral to Ireland's future success in Europe's largest Framework Programme.

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 of 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 focus on increasing participation levels in those sectors underrepresented in Horizon 2020, in particular the technological higher education sector, enterprise, civil society 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

- Support the Head of Office in the delivery of IMSCO services and attainment of goals including the contribution of the MSCA to the national Horizon Europe funding target;
- Gather, analyse and pro-actively use data on the Horizon 2020 and 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 promote MSCA to increase participation

- 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;
- 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;

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/support/ncp/h2020-standards-principles_en.pdf

- Increase awareness and participation of the MSCA through engagement with civil society organisations and stakeholders;
- 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;

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

- 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;

D. Training & Mobility

- Support the Head of Office with the NET4MOBILITY+ 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;

- Experience of liaising with a broad range of stakeholders and the research community.
- 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:

- Previous experience of strategic planning and objective setting;
- 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;

Contract details

The positions of NCP for MSCA 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 is subject to a period of probation and meeting on-going performance requirements. The role will require domestic travel within Ireland on a regular basis, when possible, with European travel also required as appropriate.

Salary 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, Thursday 14th October 2021**

to: marguerita.lardner@iua.ie

Tel. 01 6764948

Subject to panel availability, interviews will be scheduled on Friday 22nd October 2021.

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

The IUA is an equal opportunities employer