

**Acting National Contact Point for Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) funded
by Taighde Éireann - Research Ireland in partnership with the IUA
(Maternity cover, January 2025 – December 2025)**

The Irish Universities Association (IUA), in partnership with Taighde Éireann - Research Ireland invites applications for the role of Acting National Contact Point (NCP) for Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) for a 12-month maternity cover fixed-term contract.

The Irish Universities Association works in partnership with Taighde Éireann - Research Ireland 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 from Taighde Éireann - Research Ireland supports the MSCA NCP for Ireland to work in the IMSCO until the end of December 2025, supporting the Head of the IMSCO (MSCA National Delegate (ND) and 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.

Taighde Éireann - Research Ireland, hereafter referred to as Research Ireland, is Ireland's newly founded competitive research and innovation funding agency having amalgamated the activities and functions of the Irish Research Council and Science Foundation Ireland. The new agency has a mandate to promote the attainment and maintenance of excellence in the standard and quality of research and innovation in Ireland, and to support the undertaking of research and innovation across all disciplines and by researchers at all stages of their career (including early-stage researchers).

Research Ireland 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 Research Ireland are thus intertwined with the national mandate of the agency.

Since 2012, the IUA has partnered with the Irish Research Council (now part of Research Ireland) 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, and approximately €98 million to date under Horizon Europe (the current Framework Programme).

Horizon Europe runs from 2021 to 2027 funding collaborative and cutting-edge research across Europe. This MSCA NCP role will be essential to Ireland's success in Europe's largest Framework Programme, particularly within MSCA, of which Ireland performs extremely well under Horizon Europe.

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

The IMSCO facilitates access to Horizon Europe's MSCA for Irish higher education, public, and private sector organizations, guiding applicants in developing competitive proposals for MSCA Calls. Ireland's strong track record in MSCA offers a strategic opportunity to broaden engagement across sectors (universities, TUs, IoTs, enterprise, and civil society) and disciplines (AHSS and STEM) in the programme. The IUA seeks a qualified and experienced individual to provide maternity cover for the existing MSCA NCP role to help further Ireland's achievements and drive expanded participation.

Job Specification and Key Responsibilities & Deliverables

Supporting the Head of the IMSCO, the acting 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 continued focus on increasing participation levels in those sectors underrepresented in the programme, in particular the technological higher education sector, the AHSS community, civil society, and enterprise.

The acting NCP will adhere to the minimum standard and guiding principles for that role as set down by the European Commission.¹ The key functions of the acting MSCA NCP will include:

A. To advance national objectives for MSCA

- **Support strategic outcomes:** Assist the Head of Office in delivering IMSCO services to meet key goals, including maximizing MSCA's contribution to Ireland's Horizon Europe funding targets.
- **Data-driven growth:** Proactively gather, analyse, and apply data on MSCA participation in Horizon Europe to strengthen and expand successful Irish involvement.
- **Collaborative outreach:** Coordinate with other NCPs and funding bodies to ensure comprehensive dissemination and maximize added value for researchers across Horizon Europe programmes.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ncp-guiding-principles_he_en.pdf

B. To drive strategic growth in MSCA participation

- **Strategic Promotion:** Collaborate with the Head of Office to raise the national and international profile of MSCA.
- **Technological Sector Engagement:** Enhance MSCA visibility and engagement within the technological higher education sector by engaging with key institutions and the Technological Higher Education Association.
- **Civil Society Outreach:** Expand MSCA participation by fostering awareness and collaboration with civil society organizations and stakeholders.
- **Enterprise Sector Integration:** Increase enterprise sector engagement by leveraging State Agencies' promotional channels, especially through IDA and Enterprise Ireland.
- **Intersectoral Collaboration:** Emphasize the strategic importance of intersectoral partnerships in MSCA projects.
- **Optimize COFUND Uptake:** Drive optimal uptake of COFUND by providing tailored support to applicants in these co-financing doctoral and post-doctoral fellowship programmes.

C. To support Ireland's RPOs and assist both current and prospective MSCA applicants.

- **Strategic RPO Engagement:** Regularly liaise with research officers/managers in RPOs to promote MSCA participation, especially in currently underrepresented sectors.
- **RPO Capacity Building:** Support RPOs in developing and implementing strategic plans that increase MSCA involvement.
- **High-Level Applicant Guidance:** Provide expert guidance to prospective applicants to help them create competitive MSCA proposals.
- **Comprehensive Training Programs:** Deliver targeted, scheme-specific training and workshops across all MSC Actions ahead of key deadlines, contributing to a robust support system that includes webinars, 'Train the Trainer' workshops, support materials, and proposal-writing sessions.
- **Pre-Evaluation and Feedback:** Assist with IMSCO's proposal pre-evaluation service, providing timely, constructive feedback.
- **Evaluation Process Insights:** Offer applicants strategic advice and insights on evaluation outcomes, including guidance on redress and resubmission.
- **Implementation Support:** Advise successful applicants during implementation phase.
- **Responsive Advisory Service:** Address detailed and general MSCA inquiries in collaboration with the Head of Office.
- **Advance mobility and career development:** Collaborate closely with the EURAXESS Ireland office, based at the IUA, to provide researchers with strategic guidance and support on mobility and career development.

Candidate Skills and Attributes

This is a pivotal, hands-on role where the successful candidate will leverage their expertise to achieve impactful results that directly support Ireland's research ambitions within the European landscape. The ideal candidate will bring the following skills and experience:

Essential:

- A primary degree and at minimum three years' experience in a research funder, research support or research administration.
- Strong expertise in EU R&D funding, with proven experience in drafting and refining proposals for EU calls.
- Excellent communication skills, with the confidence to deliver engaging presentations to large audiences.
- Experience in building relationships across diverse stakeholder groups within the research community.
- Outstanding interpersonal skills, sound judgement, and the ability to remain composed under pressure, especially in external engagements.
- A results-driven mindset and a proactive, self-starting approach.
- Proficiency in data analysis and the preparation of statistical reports.
- Solid understanding of the research ecosystem at a national and European level.

Desirable:

- Proven experience in strategic planning and objective setting, essential for aligning initiatives with broader research goals.
- A track record in identifying EU funding opportunities and effectively defining and reviewing proposals to secure funding.
- Familiarity with the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions and Framework Programmes, showcasing an understanding of key EU initiatives.
- Experience of engaging with enterprise and civil society organizations on research projects, addressing challenging issues which may arise (including Intellectual Property).
- A background in collaborating with the technological higher education sector to drive research advancements.
- Knowledge of the contractual requirements and implementation of Horizon Europe awards.
- Experience working with and contributing to EU networks, enhancing collaborative opportunities.
- Awareness of leveraging social media for business purposes to amplify research initiatives and engagement.

Contract details

This appointment is offered with effect from 6 January 2025 and will be for a fixed period terminating on 31st December 2025 and subject to a period of probation and meeting on-going performance requirements. This appointment is solely for the purpose of providing maternity leave cover.

The IUA operates a flexible working model and this role can be partially fulfilled through remote working. However, the role will require some in-office working, especially in the early stages, with routine face-to-face engagement with key stakeholders as required on university campuses and elsewhere. European travel also required as appropriate.

A competitive salary commensurate with experience will be offered. Annual leave entitlement is 25 days (not including bank holidays) for the duration of the contract.

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 **23:59 Sunday 24th November** to: marguerita.lardner@iua.ie Tel. 01 6764948

Subject to panel availability, interviews will be scheduled on Tuesday 3rd or Wednesday 4th December 2024.

Applications submitted by or through third parties, including recruitment agencies, will be rejected. The IUA is an equal opportunities employer