

Recruitment procedure
for
PhD Candidates
in the Horizon Europe MSCA Doctoral
Network



Date: October 03, 2025
Version: 1.2



This project has received funding from the European Union's (EU) Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 101226733.

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1. Purpose

To ensure a transparent, fair, and EU-compliant recruitment process for PhD candidates across the EURECA consortium.

2. Scope

This SOP applies to all recruitment activities for Early-Stage Researchers (R1) also referred to as Doctoral Candidates (DNs) funded under the EURECA project, including advertising, selection, and appointment.

3. Responsibilities

Project Coordinator: Oversees compliance and documentation.

Institutional PIs: Conduct recruitment in line with institutional and EU rules.

Supervisory Board: Provides oversight and validation of final selections.

4. Recruitment Timeline

Vacancy Posting: At project start 1 November 2025

Selection Period: Rolling, with aim to complete by May 2026.

Start Date for DCs: Ideally by June 2026.

DC recruitment completed: 1 November 2026.

5. Recruitment Procedure

Step 1: Vacancy Content

- Each institution drafts a project-specific vacancy (based on the EURAXESS format) including:

- **PhD project title:** [.....]
- **Job information**
 - Work location(s)
 - Country: [.....]
 - Organisation/Company: [.....]
 - Research field:
 - Researcher profile: **First Stage Researcher, R1**
 - Position: **PhD Position**
 - Funding Programme: **Horizon Europe – MSCA**
 - Application deadline: **February 2026**
 - Type of Contract – **Temporary**
 - Job Status - **Full-time**
 - Hours Per Week: **36-40**
 - Offer Starting Date: **June 2026**
 - Marie Curie Grant Agreement Number: **101226733**

- **Offer (PhD project) Description**

- MSCA and EURECA:

Are you a highly motivated early-stage researcher with a passion for molecular biology, RNA, and cancer research? Do you aspire to work in a dynamic, international, and interdisciplinary research environment?

EURECA – The European Epitranscriptomics of Cancer Academy invites applications for **14 doctoral positions** across Europe, offering a unique opportunity to be part of a cutting-edge training network in **cancer epitranscriptomics**, the study of RNA modifications and their and their impact on cancer initiation, progression, and treatment.

EURECA is an innovative and interdisciplinary Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Doctoral Network (MSCA-DN) funded by the European Union. Coordinated by Erasmus University Medical Center (Rotterdam, The Netherlands), the network brings together 21 academic, clinical, and industrial partners from across Europe. Each doctoral candidate will undertake a **cutting-edge research project**, receive **structured training**, and benefit from **international mobility** through secondments at partner institutions to acquire the skills, knowledge, and entrepreneurial mindset needed to drive breakthroughs in cancer biology and contribute to the development of novel diagnostic tools and therapeutics.

For more information visit us at eureca-dn.com

- Short overview of the PhD project: [.....]

- **Where to apply**

- Email or jobs website of your institution: [.....]

○ **Requirements**

- Research field: (chose from [MSCA Keywords](#))
- Education level: **European Master Degree or equivalent**

○ **Skills/Qualifications** (adapt according to specific project)

- Master Degree in life sciences, biomedical sciences, molecular biology, bioinformatics, or related fields.
- Experience in at least one of the following areas: cell and/or molecular biology, biochemistry, biotechnology, bioinformatics.
- **Demonstrated interest in cancer research and RNA biology**
- Demonstrated academic excellence is a pre.
- Practical experience in laboratory environment is a plus (optional for bioinformatics).
- Basic knowledge of Microsoft office, statistics, graphical data presentation.
- Excellent organisation and communication skills and a collaborative mindset
- Willing to travel for short or longer periods.
- Flexible and co-operative with a well-structured and autonomous working style.
- **Fluency in written and spoken English is a must.**

○ **Additional Information**

- Eligibility criteria:

- You must hold Master of Science degree (MSc) or equivalent at the date of recruitment.

- You cannot be in possession of a doctoral degree at the date of the recruitment. Researchers who have successfully defended their doctoral thesis but who have not yet formally been awarded the doctoral degree will not be considered eligible.

- Mobility rule:

Candidates can be of any nationality. Candidates must not have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in [the country of the recruiting beneficiary] for more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately before their recruitment date.

Compulsory national service, short stays such as holidays and time spent by the researcher as part of a procedure for obtaining refugee status under the Geneva Convention are not taken into account.

- Benefits:

The employment contract will follow the conditions and salary adapted to the life cost in each host country, set by the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2025, MSCA.

The monthly gross salary will comprise a gross **living allowance** (€4010/month) corrected by a country-of-employment factor and minus all compulsory deductions under national legislation such as employer and employee social security contributions and direct taxes), **mobility allowance** (€710/month) and **if applicable a family allowance** (€660/month).

- Selection process:
3 steps selection process including:
 - A preselection based on eligibility and written application
 - First interview with a small panel from host institution
 - Second interview with a larger panel
- How to apply: Send a CV, motivation letter and the contact information of 2 references to [.....]. A useful [CV builder](#) that makes it easy to create your CV online can be found here: [EUROPASS CV](#) EUROPASS

- **Equal opportunities statement**

Recruitment will be carefully executed and monitored in accordance with the principles of the **European Charter for Researchers**, the **Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers** and in the MSCA DN mobility rules as specified in the **Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2025**. EURECA aims for a representative **gender balance** amongst the researchers to be recruited, based on an equal opportunity policy during the recruitment phase.

- **Work Location (address)**

- Number of offers available: 1
- Company/Institute:
- Country:
- City:
- Postal Code:
- Street

- **Contact**

- City:
- Website (institution/organisation):
- Street:
- Postal Code:

Step 2: Advertising

- Each beneficiary posts on [EURAXESS](#), institutional websites, EURECA website, other relevant scientific networks, e.g. TRANSLACORE.

Step 3: Initial Screening

- Conform eligibility criteria (see **point 6**)

- **ELIGIBILITY CHECK**

- The Recruitment Team will screen the applications for:
 - compliance with the eligibility criteria (Doctoral Candidate status and mobility rule) if the applications are complete (CV and Motivation letter)
 - in English
 - submitted before the deadline
- **Conformation by host institution:** The initial check of the eligibility criteria will be formally confirmed by the host institution (Human Resources department)
- **Network distribution**
Information from eligible candidates will be distributed among the host institutions.
- **Not eligible candidates** will be notified via email

- **ASSESSMENT**

An Selection Committee for each position led by the local supervisor will be set up at each host institution. Each Selection Committee will assess the candidates on quality and potential, as well as a matching of their scientific profile with the individual projects and according to the requirements and skills criteria listed in the vacancy content (step 1).

Assessment will be made according to academic qualifications, personal motivation, relevant scientific background, professional experience, scientific knowledge, transferable skills, soft skills and English proficiency.

Academic excellence will be assessed on the bases of academic achievements relevant to early stage researchers (e.g. co-authorship of scientific publications in peer reviewed national and/or international journals, scientific awards and/or fellowships, Cum Laude, etc.)

Each Selection Committee will short-list 2 to 4 best candidates among those applying for the DC position and produce a reserve list of 2 to 4 potentially interesting candidates. The list of preselected candidates along with the candidate CV and motivation letter will be distributed among all the beneficiaries.

Step 4: Interview process and final selection

- Candidates pre-selected for specific positions will be given the opportunity to discuss the doctoral programme and specific project with the main supervisor and co-supervisor of the host institution in a face-to-face meeting or videoconference depending on logistics and circumstances. Best short-listed candidates will be invited for an on-line or face-to-face interview.
- An Interview Committee including at least the local supervisors, the network supervisor and the secondment supervisor will interview the 2 short-listed candidates for each DC position. During the interview the candidates will be given the opportunity to present themselves and their previous research during a 15 min scientific presentation.
- The Interview committee will then decide which candidate is best suited for the position and formally inform the candidate by e-mail.
- All non-selected candidates will receive a letter including motivation for non-selection, in line with the Code of Conduct.

Step 5: Final Procedures

- Host institution makes the final decision and document the process.
- The selected DC are to start their research as quickly as possible in line with the specific requirements of the hiring institute's Human Resources department and in line with all provisions for VISA etc.

Additional information

- The recruitment procedure is “decentralised”, meaning that the involved supervisors the search for good candidates independently.
- The Consortium is kept informed at all times when new eligible candidates appear.
- The Recruitment Committee makes an official complaint in case the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers is breached. The involved supervisor is then expected to find another candidate.

Equal opportunities statement

Recruitment will be carefully executed and monitored in accordance with the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and **Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers** and in the DN mobility rules, establishing open and efficient recruitment procedures, which are tailored to the type of positions advertised. The recruitment procedures will be open, efficient, transparent, supportive and internationally comparable.

EURECA aims for a representative **gender balance** amongst the researchers to be recruited, based on an equal opportunity policy during the recruitment phase. The vacancies description will explicitly encourage the application of female researchers. Moreover, female candidates will be selected in preference should a female and a male candidate achieve the same evaluation results.

Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers

- Recruitment should be open, efficient and transparent
- Selection should be by gender balanced and trained panels
- Transparency of procedure for candidates
- Merit should be judged both qualitatively and quantitatively, balancing a good range of criteria
- Career breaks and other multidimensional career tracks should not be penalised
- Recognition of mobility experience
- Recognition of qualifications
- Seniority ('the levels of qualifications required should be in line with the needs of the position and not be set as a barrier to entry')

6. Eligibility criteria

Qualifications

- Candidates must hold Master of Science degree (MSc) or equivalent at the date of recruitment.
- Candidates cannot be in possession of a doctoral degree at the date of the recruitment. Researchers who have successfully defended their doctoral thesis but who have not yet formally been awarded the doctoral degree will not be considered eligible.

Mobility rule

- Candidates can be of any nationality. Candidates must not have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in the country of the recruiting beneficiary¹ for more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately before their recruitment date.
- Compulsory national service, short stays such as holidays and time spent by the researcher as part of a procedure for obtaining refugee status under the Geneva Convention are not taken into account.
- For 'International European Research Organisations' (IERO), 'international organisations', or entities created under Union law, the researchers must not have spent more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately before their recruitment in the same appointing organisation.

English language

Doctoral Candidate (DCs) must demonstrate that their ability to understand and express themselves in both written and spoken English is sufficiently high for them to derive the full benefit from the network training.

Exclusivity

The candidate must be working exclusively for the action. Each student will benefit from a wide-ranging training between universities, research centers and industry that will take advantage of both local and network-wide activities.

¹ Country of the main activity: the country where the researcher is physically based when carrying out the main activity and the country of the institution for which the main activity is performed (e.g., employer)

7. Benefits

The 14 doctoral positions (DC1,2,3 etc.) are funded by the Marie Skłodowska Curie Action Doctoral Network **EURECA** (HORIZON-MSCA-2024-DN-01-01). The **36-month²** employment contract will follow the conditions and salary adapted to the life cost in each host country, set by the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2025, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (European Commission Decision C(2025) 2779 of 14 May 2025).³

The monthly gross salary will comprise a gross **living allowance**, **mobility allowance** (€710/month) and **if applicable a family allowance** (€660/month).

Living Allowance: This gross amount is EUR 4010 per month corrected with the country of employment factor and minus all compulsory deductions under national legislation such as employer and employee social security contributions and direct taxes). The correction coefficient is applied to ensure equal treatment and purchasing power parity for all employed researchers.

Mobility allowance: This monthly gross amount of EUR 710 is an addition to the living allowance and should normally be paid at the same time. It is intended to cover the costs associated with the fact that the DC has moved to a different country to take up the position. Furthermore, it is for private use; therefore, it is not meant to cover any expenses related to the project (such as secondment costs, travel costs for attending a conference, etc.).

Family allowance: If the DC has or will acquire family obligations during the action duration, it is entitled to an additional gross "family allowance" of EUR 660 per month. For the purposes of the MSCA, family is defined as "persons linked to the researcher by marriage (or a relationship with equivalent status to a marriage recognised by the legislation of the country where this relationship was formalised) or dependent children who are actually being maintained by the researcher".

Amounts indicated for living allowance, mobility allowance, and family allowance are gross amounts before taxation and compulsory deductions. Additional information can be found in [Information Note for MSCA doctoral networks](#).

² Or 48-month if the organization has secured funding for the forth year.

³ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2023-2024/wp-2-msca-actions_horizon-2023-2024_en.pdf ; page 118

8. Documentation Requirements

- Maintain detailed records of job postings, applications, evaluations, interviews, and decisions.
- Submit summary to Coordinator for the Recruitment Progress Report.

9. Monitoring

Coming soon.....

10. Compliance

The beneficiary must recruit each eligible doctoral candidate under an **employment contract** or equivalent direct contract, including an instrument of appointment (e.g., for permanent staff and/or officials), with full social security coverage (including sickness, parental, unemployment and invalidity benefits, pension rights, benefits in respect of accidents at work and occupational diseases). An exemption from this rule can be accepted only in cases where national legislation or the equivalent internal regulations of International European Research Organisations (IERO), entities created under Union law, or an international organisation, prohibit this possibility and subject to the prior agreement of the granting authority. (see also appendix 1)

Researchers must be enrolled in a **doctoral programme** leading to the award of a doctoral degree in at least one EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country.

11. Relevant documents

Horizon Europe program guide v5.1 15 September 2025:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/programme-guide_horizon_en.pdf

Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2025; Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (European Commission Decision C(2025) 2779 of 14 May 2025):

https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2023-2024/wp-2-msca-actions_horizon-2023-2024_en.pdf

The European Code of Conduct for research Integrity (revised edition 2023):

https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/european-code-of-conduct-for-research-integrity_horizon_en.pdf

The European Charter for Researchers The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers

https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/am509774cee_en_e4.pdf

Appendix 1. MSCA DOCTORAL NETWORKS: Applicable unit contributions⁴

The EU contribution for MSCA Doctoral Networks will take the form of unit contributions, as stipulated in Decision of 11 March 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions and unit contributions for Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions under the Horizon Europe Programme⁵.

The following budget categories apply:

Table 1 Applicable unit contributions

MSCA Doctoral Networks	Contributions for recruited researchers					Institutional unit contributions	
	per person-month					per person-month	
	Living allowance	Mobility allowance	Family allowance (if applicable)	Long-term leave allowance (if applicable)	Special needs allowance (if applicable)	Research, training and networking contribution	Management and indirect contribution
	EUR 4010	EUR 710	EUR 660	EUR 4720 x % covered by the beneficiary	requested unit ¹³³ x (1/number of months)	EUR 1600	EUR 1200

¹³³ requested unit pre-defined categories⁶

A country correction coefficient applies to the living allowance in order to ensure equal treatment and purchasing power parity for all researchers. This coefficient is the one applicable to the country of the recruiting beneficiary (see Appendix 2). The living allowance is a gross amount, including compulsory deductions under national law, such as employer and employee social security contributions and direct taxes. The beneficiary must recruit each eligible doctoral candidate under an employment contract or equivalent direct contract,

⁴ These conditions only apply to the 2024 and 2025 calls of this Work Programme. For the conditions applying to the 2023 calls, please see the Work Programme version adopted on 6 December 2022 (European Commission Decision C(2022)7550).

⁵ The indicative budget includes budget provisions for the increase of the maximum EU contribution for grants funded under Horizon Europe MSCA Doctoral Networks calls in line with the provisions of the decision authorising the use of lump sum contributions and unit contributions for Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions under the Horizon Europe Programme.

⁶ The pre-defined categories are as follows: EUR 3 000, EUR 4 500, EUR 6 000, EUR 9 500, EUR 13 000, EUR 18 500, EUR 27 500, EUR 35 500, EUR 47 500 and EUR 60 000.

including an instrument of appointment (e.g., for permanent staff and/or officials), with full social security coverage (including sickness, parental, unemployment and invalidity benefits, pension rights, benefits in respect of accidents at work and occupational diseases). An exemption from this rule can be accepted only in cases where national legislation or the equivalent internal regulations of International European Research Organisations (IERO), entities created under Union law, or an international organisation, prohibit this possibility and subject to the prior agreement of the granting authority.

When an employment contract or instrument of appointment cannot be provided, the beneficiary may exceptionally recruit the doctoral candidate under a 'fixed-amount fellowship'. In this case, the living allowance will be halved, and the beneficiary must ensure that the doctoral candidate enjoys minimum social security coverage (including sickness, parental and invalidity benefits, and benefits for accidents at work and occupational diseases).

The beneficiary must pay to the doctoral candidates at least the amount of the **living allowance** (minus all compulsory deductions under national legislation). A top-up may be paid to the researchers in order to complement this contribution. In addition to the living allowance, all doctoral candidates must receive a **mobility allowance**. This allowance covers their additional, private mobility-related costs (e.g. travel and accommodation costs), not their professional costs under the action, which are covered by the research, training and networking contribution.

If the recruited doctoral candidate has or acquires family obligations during the action duration, i.e. persons linked to him/her by (i) marriage, or (ii) a relationship with equivalent status to a marriage recognised by the legislation of the country or region where this relationship was formalised; or (iii) dependent children who are actually being maintained by the researcher, the **family allowance** must be paid to him/her as well.

The **long-term leave allowance** contributes to the personnel costs incurred by the beneficiaries in case of the researchers' leave, including maternity, paternity, parental, sick or special leave, longer than 30 consecutive days. The **special needs allowance** contributes to the additional costs for the acquisition of special needs items and services for researchers with disabilities, whose long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments⁷ are certified by a competent national authority, and of such nature that their participation in the action may not be possible without them (e.g. assistance by third persons, adaptation of work environment, additional travel/transportation costs). These special needs items or services must not have been funded from another source (e.g. social security or health insurance).

⁷ See Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Both long-term leave and special needs allowances should be requested when the need arises.

The **research, training and networking contribution** should cover, for example, costs for training and networking activities that contribute directly to the researchers' career development (e.g. participation in conferences, trips related to work on the action, training, language courses, seminars, lab material, books, library records, publication costs), research expenses, visa-related fees and travel expenses, additional costs arising from each secondment of six months or less, which require mobility from the place of residence (e.g. travel and accommodation costs).

The **management and indirect contribution** should cover the beneficiary's additional costs in connection with the action (e.g. personnel costs for project management/coordination, indirect costs).

The above rates apply to doctoral candidates devoting themselves to their project on a fulltime basis. Researchers may, in agreement with the supervisor and beneficiary and with prior approval by the granting authority, implement their project on a part-time basis. Such a request is limited to personal or family reasons. In cases of part-time work, the doctoral candidates must work at least 50% of the full working time in their recruiting organisation for the action funded by the MSCA135. The recruiting beneficiary should report costs as pro rata of the applicable full-time unit contributions.

Table 2 Country correction coefficients (CCC) for Doctoral Networks living allowances⁸

Country Code	Country correction coefficient
AT	109,7%
BE	100 %
FR	118,1%
DE	101,2%
ES	95,6%
IT	95,3%
NL	111,6%
PT	93,7%

⁸ These conditions only apply to the 2024 and 2025 calls of the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2025, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (European Commission Decision C(2025) 2779 of 14 May 2025).

Appendix 2. Vacancy Example (based on EURAXESS)

- **PhD project title:** [.....]
- **Job information**
 - Work location(s)
 - Country: [.....]
 - Organisation/Company: [.....]
 - Research field:
 - Researcher profile: **First Stage Researcher, R1**
 - Position: **PhD Position**
 - Funding Programme: **Horizon Europe – MSCA**
 - Application deadline: **February 2026**
 - Type of Contract – **Temporary**
 - Job Status - **Full-time**
 - Hours Per Week: **40**
 - Offer Starting Date: **June 2026**
 - Marie Curie Grant Agreement Number: **101226733**

- **Offer (PhD project) Description**

- MSCA and EURECA:

Are you a highly motivated early-stage researcher with a passion for molecular biology, RNA, and cancer research? Do you aspire to work in a dynamic, international, and interdisciplinary research environment?

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- Short overview of the PhD project: [.....]

- **Where to apply**

- Email or jobs website of your institution: [.....]

- **Requirements**

- Research field: (chose from [MSCA Keywords](#))

- Education level: **European Master Degree or equivalent**
- **Skills/Qualifications** (adapt according to specific project)
 - Master Degree in life sciences, biomedical sciences, molecular biology, bioinformatics, or related fields.
 - Experience in at least one of the following areas: cell and/or molecular biology, biochemistry, biotechnology, bioinformatics.
 - **Demonstrated interest in cancer research and RNA biology**
 - Demonstrated academic excellence is a pre.
 - Practical experience in laboratory environment is a plus (optional for bioinformatics).
 - Basic knowledge of Microsoft office, statistics, graphical data presentation.
 - Excellent organisation and communication skills and a collaborative mindset
 - Willing to travel for short or longer periods.
 - Flexible and co-operative with a well-structured and autonomous working style.
 - **Fluency in written and spoken English is a must.**
- **Additional Information**
 - Eligibility criteria:
 - You must hold Master of Science degree (MSc) or equivalent at the date of recruitment.
 - You cannot be in possession of a doctoral degree at the date of the recruitment. Researchers who have successfully defended their doctoral thesis but who have not yet formally been awarded the doctoral degree will not be considered eligible.
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Compulsory national service, short stays such as holidays and time spent by the researcher as part of a procedure for obtaining refugee status under the Geneva Convention are not taken into account.
 - Benefits:

The employment contract will follow the conditions and salary adapted to the life cost in each host country, set by the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2025, MSCA. The monthly gross salary will comprise a gross **living allowance** (€4010/month) corrected by a country-of-employment factor and minus all compulsory deductions under national legislation such as employer and employee social security contributions and direct taxes), **mobility allowance** (€710/month) and **if applicable a family allowance** (€660/month).
 - Selection process:

3 steps selection process including:

- A preselection based on eligibility and written application
 - First interview with a small panel from host institution
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- **How to apply:** Send a CV , motivation letter and the contact information of 2 references to [.....] . A useful [CV builder](#) that makes it easy to create your CV online can be found here: [EUROPASS CV](#) EUROPASS
- **Equal opportunities statement**

Recruitment will be carefully executed and monitored in accordance with the principles of the **European Charter for Researchers**, the **Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers** and in the MSCA DN mobility rules as specified in the **Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2025**. EURECA aims for a representative **gender balance** amongst the researchers to be recruited, based on an equal opportunity policy during the recruitment phase.
- **Work Location (address)**
 - Number of offers available: **1**
 - Company/Institute:
 - Country:
 - City:
 - Postal Code:
 - Street
- **Contact**
 - City:
 - Website (institution/organisation):
 - Street:
 - Postal Code: