

## Deliverable 1.2 Periodic Report – Section 1: Publishable Summary

*Second reporting period: May 15, 2014 - May 14, 2016*

The University of Konstanz belongs to the universities in Germany whose “Future concepts for top-class research at universities” is promoted within the framework of the Excellence Initiative of the German federal and state governments. The Zukunftskolleg is a central scientific institution of the University of Konstanz for the promotion of young researchers from the 13 Departments represented at the University—in the natural sciences, humanities and social sciences. It is an integral component of the institutional strategy “Model Konstanz — Towards a Culture of Creativity.” The Zukunftskolleg forms a platform for interdisciplinary discourse between distinguished researchers in Germany and abroad, and provides them with resources for obtaining extramural funding.

The Zukunftskolleg offers postdoctoral researchers a creative space for pursuing cutting-edge research, gaining academic independence, and launching their careers at the finest research institutions in Germany and the ERA. Fellows are provided with top-level research conditions and an inspiring scientific environment along with freedom and independence to pursue their research.

The Marie Curie COFUND Zukunftskolleg Incoming Fellowship Programme (henceforth ZIF-MC), launched in May 2012 offers 5-year ZIF-MC Research Fellowships and 2-year ZIF-MC postdoctoral fellowships. This programme is financed by the Seventh Framework Program (FP7) Marie Curie Actions – People (co-funding of regional, national and international programs), the German Research Foundation (DFG), and the University of Konstanz. 2-year Fellowships target postdoctoral researchers in the first years after completion of their PhD. 5-year Fellowships are tailored for researchers with several years of experience in academic teaching, scientific research, and management of third-party funded projects.

The programme attracts top-level experienced researchers from outside Germany and develops mutually-beneficial long-term research cooperations. By offering a creative environment for innovative research, the Zukunftskolleg supports the career development of young postdoctoral researchers from across the world. Dialogue and cooperation is fostered beyond research disciplines and across generations through a productive and supporting community of Fellows. Young academics at the Zukunftskolleg receive optimal career advancement support along with the best possible curriculum and research experience, reinforcing equal opportunities for all researchers. The Zukunftskolleg is characterized by its experimental character: providing Fellows with the freedom and opportunity to explore and expand their research on many levels. The overall infrastructure and environment is a major contributor to the Zukunftskolleg’s central goal: to encourage early scientific independence.

To achieve these objectives, the ZIF-MC Programme offers ideal research conditions to excellent postdoctoral scholars who are selected on the basis of their academic track record, the quality and topicality of their research project outline, and their personal aptitude and interdisciplinary interest. The Marie-Curie Fellows benefit from a variety of programmes and instruments available at the Zukunftskolleg to support interdisciplinary research and networking. The most important instruments include:

- The **weekly Jour Fixe**: Regular presentations of research projects by the Fellows enabling them to meet and interact with each other;
- The **Senior Fellowship Award**: Fellows can propose to invite established international researchers at the Zukunftskolleg to receive support for their work through cooperative research, advice, and discussions.
- The **Scientific Retreat**: Fellows can apply for an off-site workshop outside the university campus to identify and explore new and innovative research directions;

- The **Mentorship Programme** enables Fellows to invite renowned scholars in their field to Konstanz for a few days as mentors. The cooperation is consolidated by, in turn, visiting their mentor.
- The **Alumni Cooperation Programme** support cooperations between a current and a former Fellow of the Zukunftscolleg. Grants will be given to support cooperations that foster joint research projects.
- **Additional funding for research projects:** Fellows may apply for co-funding the human and material resources needed for their research activities (such as student/ research assistants, conferences, equipment, research trips or consumables). In addition, they may apply for up to 10,000 € to implement interdisciplinary, intersectoral, transdepartmental and collaborative teaching and/or research projects.

During their stay at the Zukunftscolleg, Fellows gain academic independence and develop the disciplinary, interdisciplinary and professional skills needed to become leading experts in the international research community and decisively shape the research of the future. Thus, the Zukunftscolleg trains researchers who will advance their research fields and take up principal positions in academia and society.

5-year ZIF-MC Research Fellows establish their own junior research groups during the project—developing early research independence, while expanding leadership and management skills. To this end, they are required to apply for external research funding of at least 50,000 Euros to be used in Konstanz during their Fellowship in order to establish their research group. This funding is part of the application requirements. 2-year ZIF-MC Postdoctoral Fellowships provide recent PhDs with the opportunity to focus on new and innovative research projects—enabling them to establish further research expertise. While Fellows have no teaching obligations, many take advantage of the close cooperation with their respective Departments to develop and offer courses specifically suited to their current lines of research. Applications are open to all 13-disciplines represented at the University of Konstanz.

During the first four years of the ZIF-MC programme, the Zukunftscolleg published 5 Calls for Fellowships and received more than 1000 eligible applications in total for Fellowships. Typically, each application Call receives applications from over 40 nationalities worldwide. Applications undergo a stringent selection process—making the process a highly competitive one not only due to the high number of applications received but from the quality expected from each application and supporting documents.

A Recruitment Committee composed of representatives of the 13 Departments represented at the University of Konstanz are joined by 13 external, internationally renowned scholars from these fields. 2 Zukunftscolleg Fellows and the Director complete the Recruitment Committee. 2-year applications undergo a 2-stage process after an initial pre-selection eligibility check. 5-year Fellows undergo a 3-stage process. The first stage selects candidates from both categories to be considered further based upon the written application, supporting documents, and two letters of reference. In the second stage, the selected applications undergo a peer-review process—each application is submitted to two internationally respected researchers to evaluate the application. Based upon these evaluations, 2-year Fellows are selected at the second meeting of the Recruitment Committee, while finalists for the 5-year Research Fellowships are chosen and invited to attend a Workshop on Future Research Directions. This 2-day Workshop provides 5-year candidates with the opportunity to present and discuss their proposed research, engage in scholarly discussion with Fellow candidates and members of the Recruitment Committee, while providing them with the opportunity to tour the facilities of the University and Zukunftscolleg. An individual interview with the Recruitment Committee provides a final opportunity for close discussion and evaluation of the proposed research and application. Fellows are selected after the completion of the Workshop.

With the final Call for fellowships in 2015, the Zukunftscolleg's ZIF-MC programme has recruited 46 2-year Fellows and 10 5-year Fellows (2 with status pending upon approval of third-party funding, one with expected start on August 1, 2016 and another 1 currently in contract negotiations, likely to start on October 1, 2016).

More information on our webpage: <https://www.uni-konstanz.de/zukunftscolleg/>

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