Co-funding of regional, national and international programmes

Each proposal funded under the COFUND scheme must have a sole beneficiary that will be responsible for the availability of the necessary complementary funds to execute the proposal.

Applicants submit multi-annual proposals for new or existing doctoral programmes or fellowship programmes which are expected to have an impact on enhancing research- and innovation related human resources on regional, national or international level.

Applicants having benefited from COFUND under previous calls (under the Seventh Framework Programme or under Horizon 2020) must explain how their proposal adds value in relation to the excellence and/or the impact award criteria, compared to their previous grant(s). As an example, added value could take the form of increased networking with organisations in less represented countries or capacity building measures there to further structure the European Research Area.

Researchers supported under this scheme shall comply with the mobility rules of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions.

Limitations regarding the researchers’ origin and destination should be avoided. Support cannot be awarded to researchers who are already permanently employed by the organisation hosting them.

Proposed programmes are encouraged to cover all research disciplines ("bottom-up"), but can also focus on specific disciplines. In this case the range of covered disciplines should allow reasonable flexibility for the researchers.
Programmes that prioritise specific research disciplines based on national or regional Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation (RIS3 strategies) can also be supported. Synergies with the European Structural & Investment Funds (ESIF) are encouraged[[https://ec.europa.eu/research/regions/index.cfm?pg=synergies]].

COFUND takes the form of:

A) Doctoral programmes

Doctoral programmes address the development and broadening of the research competencies of early-stage researchers. The training follows the EU Principles on Innovative Doctoral Training. Substantial training modules, including digital ones, addressing key transferable skills common to all fields and fostering the culture of Open Science, innovation and entrepreneurship will be supported. Collaboration with a wider set of partner organisations, including from the non-academic sector, which may provide hosting or secondment opportunities or training in research or transferable skills, as well as innovative and interdisciplinary elements of the proposed programme, will be positively taken into account during the evaluation.

Each researcher must be enrolled in a doctoral programme. Attention is paid to the quality of supervision and mentoring arrangements as well as career guidance. The selection procedure for doctoral candidates must be open, transparent and merit-based. The vacancy notice must include the minimum gross salary offered to the researcher, as set out in the proposal.

B) Fellowship programmes

Fellowship programmes fund individual research training and career development fellowships for experienced researchers. The programmes supported should have regular selection rounds following fixed deadlines or regular cut-off dates, allowing fair competition between the researchers applying. The selections should be based on open, widely advertised competition (the vacancy notice must include the minimum gross salary offered to the researcher, as set out in the proposal), with transparent international peer review and the selection of candidates on merit. Mobility types supported by fellowship programmes may be similar to the ones supported under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowships. On top of transnational mobility, applicants are encouraged to include elements of cross-sectoral mobility and interdisciplinary into their programmes. Fellowship programmes should be based on individual-driven mobility, i.e. researchers should be able to freely choose a research topic and the appropriate organisation to host them, fitting their individual needs.
Given that the aim of the co-funded fellowship programmes is the support of individual fellows, research teams will not be funded.

At researcher level:

- Augment and diversify the set of skills, both research-related and transferable ones, that will lead to improved employability and career prospects both in and outside academia
- Forge new mind sets and approaches to research and innovation work through interdisciplinary and intersectoral experience
- Enhance networking and communication capacities with scientific peers, as well as with the general public, that will increase and broaden the research and innovation impact

At organisation level:

- Increasing the attractiveness of the participating organisation(s) towards talented researchers
- Boosting research and innovation output among participating organisations
- Strengthening of international, intersectoral and interdisciplinary collaborative networks that will reinforce the organisation’s position and visibility at a global level, but also at a regional/national level by helping them become key actors and partners in the local socio-economic ecosystems

At system level:

- Aligning of practices and policies in the context of the EU Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R), enhanced implementation of the Charter and Code and the EU Principles for Innovative Doctoral Training at regional, national or international level
- Supporting the practice of Open Science through targeted training activities
- Increase in international, interdisciplinary and intersectoral mobility of researchers in Europe
- Improvement in the working and employment conditions for researchers in Europe at all levels of their career, starting from the doctoral stage
- Strengthening of Europe’s human capital base in research and innovation and structuring of a stronger European Research Area
- Increase in Europe’s attractiveness as a leading destination for research and innovation
- Better quality research and innovation contributing to Europe’s competitiveness and growth, including by supporting regional or national smart specialisation strategies when appropriate.