

## ZÁPIS: IGLO WG MSCA

Datum:	2. října
Místo konání:	Brusel + online
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1

### Graham Wilkie (MSCA and Citizens, COFUND and Support Activities, Unit, REA European Commission)

Feedback to policy to MSCA COFUND took place this year – process and results:

- questionnaire for all running and finished project – survey, meetings,... (results were send to NCPs in January/February)
- apart from the survey we also invited beneficiaries to talk about different aspects of projects (talking to them in smaller groups)
- results: flexibility as one of the advantages of COFUND is more on paper than in reality (projects of one institution are less common, but most projects are an informal consortium which **adds administrative burden to the coordinator and in reality functions as a multibeneficiary project**)
- one of the issues that worries us is a geographical spread – half of projects based out of France and Spain and there are many countries with only 0-2 projects
- less than 100 applications this year, which is more or less stable and the same as in the last years – there is no increase, even though the budget is quite reasonable – one of the aims of the consultations is to increase the applications, especially in countries with few applications
- Czech currently 5 applications in the last call – very good 😊 (*pozn. pokud bychom chtěli sdílet tipy jak jsme toho dosáhli a jaké byly největší překážky, tak můžeme*)
- REA wants to know why the low numbers of applications, what they can do to increase the numbers – any feedback is welcomed
  - o KoWi: biggest issue in Germany is the co-funding which German institutions don't have, also COFUND is only intended to start the cooperation, but then the project should continue, but there is usually no money (on national/institutional level) to continue and to follow-up

### Rodrigo Gutierrez-Dominguez (MSCA Staff Exchange Unit, REA European Commission)

- MSCA SE projects implemented through mobilities,... (obecný popis co jsou Staff Exchanges)
- Key changes:
  - o no need for letter of commitments from third country participants,
  - o UK associated country eligible for funding,
  - o increase of Unit cost (and max. project budget) – 5010 euro total per person month
- current call opening 19.9. (closure: 5.2.2025), budget: 99,47 M
- Objectives of evaluation:
  - o transform and get feedback from coordinators, beneficiaries, NCPs about possible improvement (meeting 28 November after NCP training in Brussels – outcome will be policy feedback report)



- to equip SE with strategic insights to plan future better
- we did a survey in July as a pre-step to the evaluation meeting on 28 November (more than 100 replies), we are also planning 2 meetings with NCPs (October, beginning of November) to discuss the outcome of the survey and to set the topics for the 28 November meeting
- Evaluation meeting on 28 November will have two parts – small roundtables (20 in the morning, 20 in the afternoon), then writing the report and recommendations
- Examples of implementation challenges:
  - complex administrative procedures
  - full-time commitment requirement,
  - allowance not adequate for staff members' secondments,
  - full-time secondment made multitasking and funding sharing challenging (need for complementary contract),
  - interdisciplinary 1/3 rule is demanding (“new” rule of the SE, but coordinators report that this is very demanding and challenging) – confirmed by UKRO, that they also hear that this rule is very tricky and complicated
- **Q&A:** Did you talk to the MSC Alumni association? – We are looking into possibilities how to involve them.
  - More info from EAC: they are invited to submit feedback and they are being taken into account, even though they are not invited to these specific evaluation meeting yet

#### Thierry Devars (MSCA unit, DG EAC European Commission).

- “We hope for stronger MSCA in FP10 than now.”
- Consultations started this year (*pozn. víceméně stejná prezentace jako na setkání, kde byla Míša za ACA*)
- MSCA acknowledged as the most successful part of FP together with ERC
- Importance of MSCA as fully bottom-up programme based on scientific excellence with positive impacts (especially for early career researchers) on ERA
- In terms of scientific impact – MSCA offers best value for money from all of HEU (e.g. research publications,..)
- MSCA impacts not only individuals, but also very clear institutional impact - contributing to improving standards of training and research careers (setting examples for national/regional funding bodies and individual institutions)
- MSCA is instrumental for cross-sectoral partnerships (including between academia and non-academic partners)
- Everyone is calling for significant budget increase in MSCA (did not happen between H2020 and HEU, so there is even more pressure now) – there is high ratio of high-quality applications in comparison with the rest of HEU (6x times budget increase needed to fund all quality applications, in the rest of HEU it is maximum 4x times current budget)
- Stakeholders call for:
  - stability in design and key principles (bottom-up, scientific excellence),
  - greater independence (change of governance moder, independent WP apart from HEU which is mostly designed to top-down approach, currently MSCA is the only bottom-up action which is a part of the joint WP, possibly use ERC/EIC model in the future to cope with the specificities of bottom-up approach),
  - further simplification and better articulation and coherence with other parts



- improving synergies with ERC and EIC – complementarity, continuum of the funding pathways, new Proof of Concept scheme
- more recommendations:
  - big concern regarding impact – to leverage MSCA on broader EU level, to find more synergies with EU level and national funds (more coordinated promotion of SoE,...), but also promotion of sustainable, diverse and inclusive research careers
  - more simplification and flexibility in implementation (secondments, allowing partners to co-manage funds,...)
  - address differences in employment contracts, apply CCCs during secondments
  - international cooperation (Visa, residency requirements issues, mixes views about directionality for attracting foreign talents)
  - widening – mixed views on scientific excellence being the only criteria vs. specific measures (extension of hop-on, ex-aequo criteria, specific incentives, relaxing the inter-sectoral requirements,...)
  - researchers at risk – mixed views on whether overall dedicated scheme on EU level should be part of MSCA or outside of it
- MSCA postdoctoral fellowships – main suggestions for the future:
  - Budget increase, extend max. duration of the standard fellowship, explore possibility to develop follow-up funding for fellows (Proof of concept,...)
- Staff exchange and COFUND *(víc info v ppt pokud bude sdílena, slidy přeskočil kvůli času)*
- MSCA Citizens *(také přeskočeno, pár info v ppt)*
- Q&A and general comments:
  - Comment from Graham (REA) on simplification 😊 : Playing devil’s advocate, some of COFUND’s problems are directly related to over-simplification. We have monobeneficiary contract despite often 10 partners hiding behind the coordinator, we have the same min salary in each country because it was felt that country correction coefficients were complicated, etc. These are genuine simplifications, but they put off applicants.
    - Thierry (EAC): yes, that is true, simplification must be balanced and always in the context of real situation and under consideration of all implications
  - Feedback from Polish Academy of Sciences: MSCA very popular in terms of applications, but there are knowledge gaps about some actions (e.g. among beneficiaries there is little info about COFUND), also lot of interest in doctoral networks, but this seems very complicated for research institutes which are not HEIs and they don’t feel comfortable in running them, issues with post-doctoral fellowships because Poland is still not perceived as a attractive destination to study/do research in – showing more good practice examples might be a way to motivate more applicants, we are willing to work on this
  - KoWi: MSCA Citizens and fixed dates for Researchers night – for some German institutions this date is problematic, because it is holiday season, could this be changed to another date?
    - Graham (REA): I got similar feedback from some other institutions (e.g. UK, where they have not started yet) – common date across Europe is good for promotion and public view, but we can maybe also promote it as a continuous effort (e.g. Researchers at school running throughout all year), so we can have more events during the year with the grant – it might be better if it is transformed into long-term series of events and only some of them happening on this set date, this specific September date was historically

probably chosen because it is start of the academic year (not too close to Christmas etc., not exam period,...)

- Graham on widening participation in Citizen action: Thierry has worked hard to ensure that the call in 2025 will have wider geographic success. Wait for the new WP to be published.

