

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

General

Q. How many contracts will be concluded after each deadline?

A. The total indicative budget is 5 M€ for the deadline of 20 May 2003, and 5 M€ for the deadline of 21 January 2004. Similar budgets are expected to be available for two later deadlines. As an indication, this action is expected to support 15-20 new chairs per 10 M€ of budget available.

Proposal issues

Q. Who applies for the Chair, the prospective Chair holder or the Host organisation?

A. The proposal must be submitted by the candidate for the Chair jointly with the Host institution.

Participants

Q. Does the Commission conclude a contract with the Chair holder?

A. No, the Commission concludes a contract with the Host organisation (the participant), who in turn concludes a special agreement with the Chair holder (the beneficiary).

Q. Can the Host organisation be an International European Interest Organisation established in any country?

A. Yes.

Q. Can the candidates submit their proposals together with more than one host institution?

A. No, the submission of a proposal involving more than one host institution from the outset is not envisaged. The rules say, however, that in the course of the project the Commission may exceptionally authorise a change of contractor on the request of the Chair holder if necessary to ensure further development of the project.

Eligible Researchers

Q. Should the Chair holder be a national of a different country from that of the Host organisation?

A. Yes, normally this is the case. There are however exceptions to this rule (e.g. in the case of a researcher holding multiple nationalities, or having stayed for a long time in a Third country, or where the host is an International European Interest Organisation).

Q. Do Chair holders need to be European?

A. No, Chair holders can be of any nationality (except normally that of the Host organisation).

Q. Should the Chair holder be active in a Third country (i.e. outside European Member and Associated States) in order to qualify?

A. Not necessarily: Nevertheless, such researchers are particularly encouraged to apply, since one of the aims of the action is to contribute "to counteracting the brain drain".

Q. What is the expected level of excellence?

A. The Chair holder will be a world-class researcher with outstanding past achievements in international collaborative research. Since this is a true bottom-up activity, scientists from all scientific fields may apply.

Activities

Q. Is there a preference for certain areas of research for Marie Curie Chairs?

A. No, this action will cover all research fields ("bottom up" approach). The evaluation criteria place emphasis on subjects of relevance to Europe, or of a multidisciplinary, or leading edge nature.

Q. Can students from other universities attend lectures given by a Marie Curie Chair located at another university?

A. Yes, it is hoped that the Marie Curie Chair will attract students from other institutions in accordance with the host institution's policy.

Q. How is the Chair holder's time distributed during the contract?

A. The Marie Curie Chair holder is required to spend at least half his/her time teaching and supervising PhDs and the remaining time carrying out research.

Q. What is meant by the statement in the Work Programme that "Synergies will be sought with host organisations and comparable initiatives of the Member States, Associated States and organisations at European level, in order to achieve a greater prospect of career continuity"?

A. The precise form of co-operation with other initiatives has yet to be defined, but the intention is to obtain an effect of complementarity, with each organisation financing a separate but adjacent period in the career of the researcher, in a co-ordinated way.

Q. Can one apply for a Marie Curie Chair after having benefited from a Marie Curie Reintegration Grant?

A. Yes, it is possible to benefit from both actions cumulatively.

Financial Aspects

Q. Which expenses are eligible for funding?

A. The Community contribution includes funding for the Chair holder and for the Host institution. The funding for the Chair holder is composed of a monthly living allowance, a yearly travel allowance and a monthly mobility allowance, on the basis of fixed rates. The host institution receives a contribution to the real cost related to the Chair holder's teaching and research activities. The host institution can also get funding for part of the management cost and a contribution to the overheads. If necessary for the project and duly justified the European Commission can also agree to fund equipment expenses under certain conditions.

Q. Does the monthly living allowance include any compulsory *employer's* contribution, or does the appropriate allowance have to be passed on in full to the beneficiary under the employment contract?

A. The living allowance for researchers recruited under an employment contract is a gross amount. *"These monthly allowances include all compulsory deductions under national*

applicable legislation" (Work Programme, section 2.8.1): i.e. any compulsory employer contribution to national insurance etc. is included.

Q. May the Host organisation choose to pay the Chair holder a higher amount than that covered by the Commission contribution?

A. Yes.

Q. Is there any support foreseen for the Chair holder's family?

A. Researchers with family who undertake a mobility period abroad are entitled to a higher (monthly) mobility allowance. The mobility allowance is set at 500 €/month for a researcher without family charges at the time of recruitment; and at 800 €/month for a researcher with a marital or equivalent status recognised by national legislation and/or charge of children; and is adjusted by the same correction coefficient as the living allowance.

The (annual) travel allowance, on the other hand, is not increased.

Q. How is family status defined for the purpose of fixing the mobility allowance?

A. A Chair holder with a marital or equivalent status recognised by national legislation of the host's country and/or charge of children is entitled to the higher level of mobility allowance.

Q. Is a researcher with family obligations who does not undertake transnational mobility entitled to an allowance on account of these obligations?

A. No.

Q. Is a researcher returning to his/her own country as a Chair entitled to the mobility allowance?

A. Yes.

Q. Is it intended that contribution to the salary costs (the allowances) cover only the salary of the Chair holder, or could it also be used to cover the costs of members of a research group associated with the Chair?

A. The monthly living allowance, the travel and mobility allowances are 'earmarked' for the Chair holder and cannot be used to pay for members of the research groups associated with the Chair. However, a Host institution may apply for additional funding for researchers under the Marie Curie host-driven actions. The Host and/or the Chair may also wish to encourage individual researchers to apply for funding under the individual-driven actions.

Evaluation

Q. How is the evaluation criterion "community added value" defined?

A. In general it is understood as the contribution made by a proposed project to Community policies. It is for the proposer to highlight specific Community policies and argue how their proposal addresses them. In the case of the Marie Curie Chairs, the relevant criterion explicitly includes synergies built by carrying out the proposed research at a European level; and the impact on increasing the attractiveness of Europe, and on promoting European research careers (Work Programme, Annex II-B). Please note that this does not exclude other contributions to Community policies.

Q. How are proposals evaluated? Who are the evaluators? How many evaluators assess each proposal? How are evaluators selected? Does everybody have access to the guidelines for evaluators?

A. The *Guidance Notes for Evaluators* address these issues in detail. The general principles are set out in the *Guidelines on Proposal Evaluation and Project Selection Procedures* (the "Evaluation Manual"). These documents are available at the Marie Curie web-page

http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/fp6/mariecurie-actions/pdf/guidance_evaluators.pdf and at <http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/find-doc.htm#evalproc>

Contract/Host-Researcher Agreement

Q. What determines whether a Chair is paid under an employment contract or fixed-amount stipend?

A. The Work Programme offers the possibility for the Host organisation to opt between either alternative, following an agreement with the researcher. However, it is expected that Chair holders will be recruited on **employment contracts**. Any recruitment on the basis of a stipend must be duly justified and be compatible with national legislation, and social security must be provided for.

Q. Can a Chair holder take leave for family reasons (maternity/parental leave)?

A. Yes. Moreover, the Commission may pay a contribution in addition to the compensation received by the Chair concerned from her/his insurance. Calculated on a monthly basis, this additional contribution shall not exceed the difference between the compensation received from the national social insurance system and the amount of the monthly Community contribution for the benefit of the researcher concerned (Work Programme, section 2.8.3).

Q. Can a Chair holder work part-time?

A. Yes, but *only* if the part time arrangement corresponds to *no less than 70% of a full-time position*, and if it is duly justified for reasons connected to personal or family circumstances (education of children, child care etc).

Q. Does the host institution have to employ the Chair holder once the contract ends?

A. No, there is no requirement in the contract to be concluded between the European Commission and the host institution to employ the Chair holder permanently. The Chair holder and the Host are free to make their own arrangements. However, synergies with other non-EC sources of funding may be explored which may lead to a prolongation of the contract.