

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Postdoctoral Fellowships

Feedback to Policy Report 2026



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Feedback to Policy Report 2026

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1. Introduction

The Feedback to Policy (F2P) framework under Horizon Europe is a dedicated instrument to tap into the wealth of knowledge created in the programme and to maintain a coordinated approach to informing both the programme design and raising the visibility of the projects' achievements and impact. A key objective of the feedback to policy activities in the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) is to gather feedback from beneficiaries on the implementation of the programme, to identify and share good practices, map areas of improvement and bring beneficiaries together for exchange and future collaboration.

The Feedback to Policy activity for MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships focused on assessing the non-academic placement, introduced as a new opportunity under Horizon Europe. It was carried out internally by a joint team from the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (EAC) and the European Research Executive Agency (REA) working on the MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships.

The MSCA programme encourages international, interdisciplinary and intersectoral mobility as a driver of excellence in science and an enabler for training, skills and career development for researchers. The MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships and its predecessor MSCA Individual Fellowships under Horizon 2020 have always had a lower participation of non-academic organisations compared to the other MSCA actions.

The non-academic placement was therefore introduced under Horizon Europe to further foster intersectoral mobility of MSCA postdoctoral fellows, to expose them to different sectors outside academia and to stimulate innovation and knowledge transfer. While the participation of the non-academic sector in MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships has increased in Horizon Europe compared to Horizon 2020, only few proposals and funded projects include a non-academic placement.

The objectives of the Feedback to Policy activity were to investigate both motivations and barriers for including a non-academic placement in a MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships' proposal and review the experience of fellows with their placement so far.

The feedback gathered through this exercise will help the European Commission to inform future developments in the action to further promote intersectoral mobility.

2. The non-academic placement in MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships

The non-academic placement is a novelty introduced in the MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships action under Horizon Europe (2021-2027) to foster intersectoral mobility of postdoctoral fellows.

This novelty gives the opportunity to researchers to have an additional funded period of up to six months to carry out a placement at the end of their project in an organisation from any non-academic sector. The placement host must be established in an EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country. The placement request must be included in the proposal, explaining its added value for the project and for the career development of the researcher and it is subject to evaluation.

The objective has been to **increase the participation of the non-academic sector** in the action, to **stimulate innovation and knowledge transfer** between academic and non-academic sectors and **expand career opportunities** for MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships researchers.

The data available from Horizon Europe calls compared to Horizon 2020 provide some evidence on whether the non-academic placement has indeed contributed to increasing the participation of the non-academic sector in the action.

Beside the placement opportunity, non-academic organisations can participate in MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships either as beneficiary and main host of the fellowship or as a secondment host for short-term mobility during the period of the standard fellowship.

Based on the first four calls under Horizon Europe, there has been a notable increase in the overall participation of organisations from the non-academic sector in MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships compared to their participation under Horizon 2020. **Around 10% of projects selected under the 2021-2024 calls have involved a non-academic organisation¹**, compared to 4% in Horizon 2020². In most cases, in Horizon 2020, the non-academic organisation was the beneficiary of the project whereas in Horizon Europe, most of them have participated as associated partners, either as a secondment or a non-academic placement host.

So far, a total of 245 projects, representing just over **4% of all funded projects under the 2021-2024 calls, have included a placement**. Despite the overall increase in the non-academic sector participation in Horizon Europe, the share of projects including a placement therefore remains low. The figures from the 2021-2024 calls' applications suggest that this is primarily due to a low number of proposals involving a placement. Only just over 1220 proposals with an eligible placement have been submitted under these calls which represents around 3.7% of submitted eligible proposals. However, those proposals have a higher-than-average success rate of around 20.1% compared to the calls' average, which is around 16.6%.

Among the 245 projects involving a non-academic placement, over 30% have been in social sciences and humanities, 22% in engineering and information science, 18% in life sciences and 14% in environmental and geosciences. In comparison, under the Horizon 2020 MSCA

¹ Based on the sector identified in the participant register and including any organisation that is not listed as a higher or secondary education establishment or research organisation

² The share in Horizon 2020 increased to 5% of projects involving a non-academic organisation for the period of 2016-2020, when a multi-disciplinary "Society and Enterprise" panel was introduced to foster the participation of non-academic organisations. This panel was discontinued under Horizon Europe.

Individual Fellowships, 44% of projects involving a non-academic organisation were in life sciences, and only 10% in social sciences and humanities. The non-academic placement therefore seems to have reinforced the non-academic sector participation in disciplines where it was weaker, including in social sciences and humanities.

Most placements take place in the private-for-profit sector (63%), while 16% are in public administrations and 21% in other sectors. In Horizon 2020, the private-for-profit sector represented 73% of non-academic participation in the action, public administrations 15% and other sectors 12%. The comparison suggests that the non-academic placements have involved a wider range of non-academic organisations, with notably a significant increase in the participation of non-profit organisations.

The Feedback to Policy activity for MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships aimed to gather feedback from projects' participants to complement the data available from the call's submissions and funded projects, to assess whether the non-academic placements meet their objectives. Considering the low number of applications, a key objective of the activity has been to consider both motivations and barriers for including a non-academic placement in a MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships' proposal. In addition, the activity aimed to review the fellows' experience with their placement so far and the placement's impact on innovation and knowledge valorisation and on fellows' career development.

3. Feedback to Policy Activity: Methodology

The Feedback to Policy activity for MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships was planned in two-steps:

- 1) A **survey** sent out to all past and current MSCA postdoctoral fellows under Horizon Europe to better understand general motivations and barriers for including (or not) a non-academic placement in projects' proposal and gather general feedback on the placement experience (for those who have started or completed it).
- 2) An **online meeting** with fellows who are or have already undertaken a non-academic placement and the hosting organisations (supervisors) to gather more qualitative feedback through an exchange on their experience, from the preparation of the proposal to the implementation of the placement at the end of their fellowship.

3.1. Survey methodology and sample description

The survey was carried out from 14th to 31st March 2025 through EU Survey. It was sent out to all fellows funded under the MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships calls 2021-2023³. The survey questionnaire is available in the Annexes of this report⁴.

A total of **597 fellows responded to the survey**, which represents a response rate of close to 16%.

The sample collected represents a wide range of profiles and projects funded under the MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships' action. It includes respondents from both European (86%) and Global Fellowships (14%), as well as all scientific panels, with the most represented being Social Sciences and Humanities (28%) and Life Sciences (24%), which are also the largest panels in MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships. The smallest panels (Economics and Mathematics)

³ Projects selected under the 2024 call were not included as the results had only just been announced in February 2025 and grants were not yet signed.

⁴ See Annex 3

both represent around 2% of respondents each, which reflects the share they represent among funded MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships projects in 2021-2023 calls.

Women are well represented compared to their share in MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships projects, with 46% of the sample (while they account for 43% of fellows). Men represent 51% of respondents, non-binary 1% and 2% prefer not to declare a gender. In terms of nationalities of fellows, the sample covers 68 different nationalities, with Italy (17%) and Spain (11%) being the most represented, followed by India (8%), France (6%) and Germany (6%). These figures are similar to the share these nationalities represent in all MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships funded projects.

There is also diversity in the countries of the main host of the fellowship, with 28 countries represented in the sample. Italy (17%), Spain (16%), France (11%) and Germany (11%) are the most represented main host countries which generally reflects the share they represent in funded MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships projects.

Out of the 597 respondents, 65 (11%) included a non-academic placement in their MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships project⁵. A diversity of sectors is represented in the sample. The sample reflects quite closely each sector's participation in funded projects, with notably most respondents having a placement host in the private sector (59%), either in SMEs (34%) or large enterprises (25%). In addition, 13% of respondents had a placement in a public administration, 11% in non-profit private organisations and 17% in other sectors (i.e. museums, hospitals, international organisations, etc.).

The sample includes placement hosts from 20 different countries. The breakdown by country also reflects to some extent the share that they represent in all funded placements in 2021-2023 calls. The same five most represented countries account for more than half of the non-academic placements: Spain (25% of the sample), Germany (14%), France (13%), Italy (8%) and the Netherlands (5%). Spain, Germany and France are slightly over-represented in the sample whereas Italy and the Netherlands are somewhat under-represented compared to the share of funded non-academic placements they host.

Overall, the sample provides good coverage, which generally reflects the participation figures in all MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships funded projects.

3.2. Online meeting

The online meeting took place on 4th September 2025. The objective of the online meeting was to gather more qualitative feedback on the placement experience, including the proposal preparation but also the implementation and impact of the placement on which the survey provided more limited feedback due to the small sample of respondents who had begun or completed their placement.

For this purpose, invitations were sent out to all fellows and non-academic placement supervisors who had started or completed a placement and to those about to start.

The core of the meeting was dedicated to hold open discussions with participants on three key aspects of the placement experience: 1) proposal preparation, 2) project and placement implementation and 3) impact of the placement⁶.

⁵ around 37% of nearly 175 projects funded between 2021 and 2023 calls which included a placement.

⁶ See Annex 4 for a detailed agenda

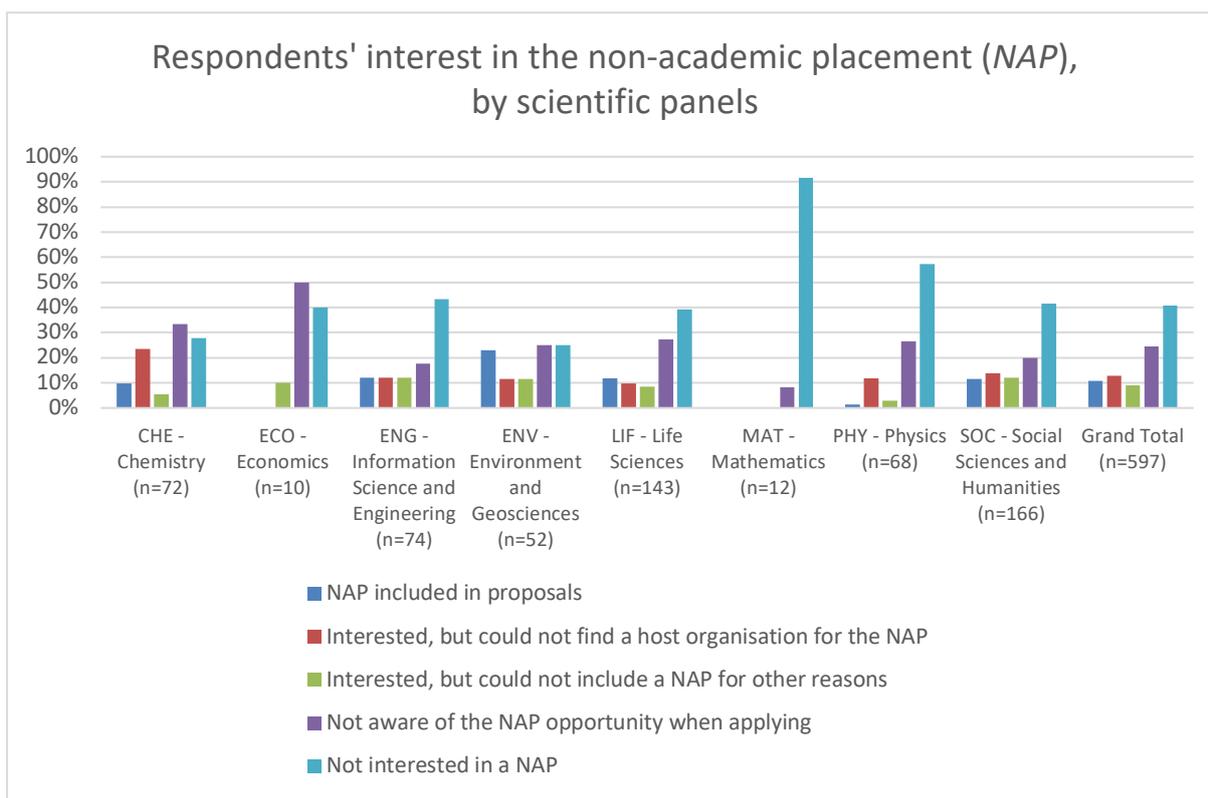
Overall, 19 fellows and two non-academic supervisors registered to participate in the meeting. The participants covered a wide range of disciplines, including social sciences and humanities, chemistry, life sciences and others. Although most of the fellows had chosen a placement in companies, other sectors were also represented, in particular public administrations and the cultural sector.

4. Feedback to Policy Activity: Results Analysis

4.1. Motivations and drivers for including a placement/involving a non-academic partner

Both the survey results and the exchanges during the online meeting provided valuable insights regarding the motivations for including a placement in a MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships and involving a non-academic partner in the project.

In the survey, in addition to the 11% of fellows who had a non-academic placement in their project, **46% were or could have been interested in a placement but they did not include one in their proposal** because they were not aware of the opportunity at the time of applying, not able to find a non-academic host or for other reasons.



There are variations in responses in different scientific fields (see graph above). Respondents from Mathematics (albeit based on a very small sample of 12 respondents), and Physics were less likely to opt for a non-academic placement and less likely to be interested in the option: among Mathematics respondents, 92% declared no interest and 57% in Physics. By contrast, respondents from Environment and Geosciences and Chemistry showed the most interest in the placement. Beside those including a placement in their proposal (23% and 10% respectively), there was a higher share of respondents from these panels interested in the non-

academic placement even when they did not include one in their proposal: 62% of respondents from Chemistry and 48% from Environment and Geosciences were or could have been interested in a non-academic placement, but did not include one in their proposal.

While the same share of male and female respondents included a non-academic placement in their proposal (11%), the former were otherwise less likely to be interested in the placements. Overall, 44% of male respondents declared no interest in a non-academic placement (vs 37% among women)⁷.

The survey asked respondents to identify the main motivations for including a non-academic placement in a MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships proposal, based on a list of multiple-choice options⁸.

The **advantage most often mentioned (by 83% of respondents) is the career opportunities** the non-academic placement can open in other sectors outside academia, followed by its contribution to transferable skills development (64%) and networking and intersectoral collaboration (56%). The scientific contributions of a non-academic placement, i.e. for developing research-specific skills and knowledge and for the exploitation of the research results and their impact, are identified by nearly half of the respondents (48% and 47% respectively). Over **one third of respondents (35%) considers the existing incentive, i.e. to extend the project duration for the non-academic placement, as a motivation**. By contrast, 4% of respondents could not identify any advantage for their research or career development of having a non-academic placement.

There were observable differences across gender and disciplines. Career opportunities were more often mentioned by fellows in Engineering and Information Science (91%) and by women (89%). Respondents from certain fields like Mathematics (albeit the very small sample) and Social Sciences and Humanities were, by contrast, less likely to identify advantages to having a non-academic placement. They were notably respectively 20% (Mathematics) and 7% (Social Sciences and Humanities) to identify no motivations for their research and career to have a non-academic placement (vs 4% average for all respondents).

Participants in the online meeting confirmed many of the motivations identified in the survey. The extension of the fellowship, exploring career opportunities outside academia, developing experience and skills which contribute more broadly to their career development, testing potential exploitation of the research results were all mentioned by participants as key benefits from the placement. When discussing the impact, the **placement was notably referred to as a “safe space”** to test a new route, either for a potential career outside academia or for exploiting research results, without losing the link with academia, as it is often very difficult to return to academia once a researcher has moved to another sector. For one participant, it was their only chance to test the possibility for large-scale production of the technology produced in the lab as part of the MSCA project, a necessary step towards a potential future commercialisation of the technology.

⁷ For other genders' respondents, the sample (n=2) is too small to draw any conclusion.

⁸ See Annex 1 for detailed results, including responses by scientific disciplines and gender.

4.2. Barriers and obstacles to include a placement/ non-academic partner

According to the survey results, among fellows who did not include a non-academic placement in their proposal, the two reasons most often identified for not doing so were a **lack of interest** and a **lack of awareness of this opportunity (with 41% and 24% of respondents respectively)**. The results indicate that continued promotion of this new opportunity to undertake a non-academic placement under Horizon Europe, is needed to ensure that all potential applicants are aware of this option when preparing their proposal.

The survey further asked all respondents to specify the main difficulties and barriers for including a non-academic placement in a MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships proposal, based on predetermined multiple-choice options⁹. Respondents had the possibility to identify other reasons not listed in the multiple-choice options in free text and provide additional remarks on these issues.

The challenge most often mentioned (52%) was “**Difficulty in finding a host organisation**”. The comments from respondents notably point out that many fellows with a non-academic placement have relied on pre-existing networks, either their own or their supervisor’s, to secure the participation of the non-academic partner. For those without pre-existing links with non-academic sectors, finding a host that is willing to take part in the proposal can be particularly challenging.

The difficulty to find a host organisation was further discussed during the online meeting with fellows and non-academic placement supervisors.

Recurring barriers mentioned by researchers in the survey and during the online meeting discussions included:

- Companies may be reluctant to host the fellow due to concerns over intellectual property rights;
- Although the placement is funded by the project, many companies may not be willing to host a researcher for such a short period, as they would have to invest time to supervise and often train them, in addition to possible administrative procedures for the placement to take place;
- the long timelapse between the host commitment and the non-academic placement taking place (usually at least 3 years) during which the situation, priorities and contacts at the host institution may change significantly;
- difficulty finding a good match between the different interests of the three parties involved (fellow, non-academic host and the beneficiary) which also address the dual objectives of the placement to stimulate knowledge transfer and career opportunities for the fellows;
- limited non-academic options in certain fields or types of research (e.g. Humanities, fundamental research) and/or lack of knowledge of possible options available.

⁹ See Annex 2 for detailed results, including responses by scientific disciplines and gender.

- the search for a non-academic placement host takes time and researchers applying for MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships might often consider the option too late in the proposal preparation process.

Time constraints were also identified by 39% of the survey respondents as another challenge to fit a non-academic placement within their postdoctoral fellowship proposal activities, while **nearly 30% were deterred by the lack of recognition** of this type of experience in their field of research. This is indeed confirmed in additional remarks made by respondents, notably the concern that a “break” away from academia, especially at the very end of their project, may have negative consequences on their career opportunities in the academic sector. A non-academic placement is not necessarily valued in researchers’ evaluations, including for career progression.

Ultimately, 38% of respondents also considered that the **limited flexibility of the non-academic placement rules** to adapt to the development of their research project was also an important barrier. Additional comments provided various suggestions for changes, including more flexibility in the timing of the non-academic placement (not necessarily at the very end of the project), the possibility to change or identify the right host during the implementation of the project to better match with the results and potential outputs and impacts.

Beside the research projects’ considerations, the required **additional mobility to move to the placement host’s premises can be challenging**, notably for researchers with family and can also be linked to additional administrative hurdles, including visa or work permits issues.

This point was indeed also mentioned repeatedly by participants in the online meeting. A mobility of six months can be complex: on the one hand, it is too short to relocate to the new location (especially with a family), and, on the other hand, it is a long period to be away from the researcher’s main residence. As a result, many participants in the online meeting limited their search to non-academic organisations close to the beneficiary to avoid the issue, which limits the options for finding a suitable host.

Longer periods in the non-academic sector were also recommended by some fellows to ensure that the placement effectively contributes to opening career opportunities in other sectors.

Participants in the online meeting flagged another concern for applicants linked to the **evaluation of the non-academic placement** in the proposal. The call emphasizes that the placement must have added value for both the project and the career development of the researcher. Often potential placement hosts will fit the career development objectives of the researcher but may not be the best match for exploiting the results of the project. In such cases, applicant researchers may be concerned that adding the placement may penalize the proposal during the evaluation.

The survey and meeting participants’ feedback suggested various **steps to address existing barriers**, notably to help applicants to find potential hosts for placements more easily. One suggestion was that the European Commission publishes a list of placement hosts in selected projects. It could help individual researchers identify potential options or the type of host they could be looking for. It was also suggested that applicant researchers should make use of the support provided by their potential beneficiary to facilitate collaboration with non-academic organisations. Many universities have support services for connecting academic researchers with businesses or other non-academic organisations that are not always exploited by

applicants. The Enterprise Europe Network¹⁰ is also a key actor in facilitating matchmaking between its large networks of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and researchers.

More generally, targeted promotion of the programme and the placement opportunity to companies was recommended by participants, to emphasize the benefits of hosting a researcher as part of a MSCA project and address some of their concerns, regarding potential administrative hurdles or intellectual property rights.

4.3. Implementation and impact of the non-academic placement

The survey provided general feedback from a small sample of respondents who had started or completed their non-academic placement, while the online meeting provided complementary comments from participants on the implementation of the non-academic placement in their respective projects.

In the survey sample, 65 respondents had a non-academic placement planned as part of their MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships project. Out of those, 19 had started or completed their placement at the time of taking the survey.

While based on a very small sample, the survey results were overall mostly positive: 17 of them considered the overall experience of the placement as very good, one as good and one as poor. Most of them (13) considered that the placement had been **beneficial to a large or very large extent for the exploitation of their research results**, with only one respondent considering it had no benefit at all. All respondents considered that the placement helped to **expand their career perspectives** to an extent, with over half (11) of them considering that it contributed to a large or very large extent to their career perspectives.

Additional comments on the overall experience with the non-academic placement in the survey notably confirmed that **many fellows had already links with the non-academic placement host** before preparing the proposal. The written comments also suggested that it is common for fellows who have not yet started their placement to be in contact and collaborate with the non-academic placement host early in the project.

More detailed examples were provided by the online meeting participants. For many of them, it was **necessary to have contacts and even visit the placement host throughout the project**, notably when the partner is needed for the data collection. Therefore, separating the placement from the main project in practice can appear rather artificial. Limiting the placement period to the end of the project can also be problematic, as it coincides with a period where the fellows may be writing scientific papers based on the results of their project, as well as preparing grant and job applications for the next steps in their career while also having to work full-time at their non-academic host organisation.

The discussions at the meeting also defined more concretely some of the **challenges of having a six-month placement in a different country**. Administratively, it can be a complex set-up of maintaining employment in one country (i.e. the country of the beneficiary) while spending up to six months in another country. Standard social security coverage, notably for health care, may be more difficult to access during the placement. Also, since the country

¹⁰ <https://een.ec.europa.eu/>

correction coefficient does not apply to the placement's host country, the allowances received from the grant may not be sufficient when the cost of living is higher at the placement location.

Other issues mentioned notably by the online meeting participants were linked to the **collaboration between the beneficiary and the placement host**, notably issues with accessing the "Research, training and networking contribution" during the placement (i.e. the grant beneficiary is not always willing to transfer the funds to the placement host for the fellow to carry out planned activities). As the placement host does not sign the grant agreement, there are also limited options when the placement host does not meet its prior commitments for hosting the researcher. Both cases emphasize the importance of having a separate **partnership agreement** between the beneficiary and the placement host which outlines the conditions for the collaboration at the start of the project. A partnership agreement can cover the transfer of funds and hosting conditions for the fellow during the placement, but also a specific agreement on intellectual property rights on results generated during the placement and any other critical considerations which should be addressed for an effective collaboration and placement implementation.

Other challenges mentioned by fewer fellows were linked to a change of non-academic placement host during the project, and sometimes a lack of clarity regarding the fellows' role at the non-academic organisation.

Beside the administrative challenges, some participants in the online meeting also mentioned that **cultural differences** between academia and non-academic sectors can be quite challenging to deal with during the project implementation, including communication issues, different paces and work environments.

The survey and online meeting participants suggested some changes to facilitate the implementation of the placement. Most of them were related to providing more flexibility for the placement implementation including:

- Being able to implement the placement during the standard fellowships period and not necessarily afterwards, according to the project's needs.
- Being able to split the placement in shorter periods rather than in one single period, to better integrate it to the overall project and the needs of the research and training activities
- Being able to have a longer placement (more than six months) as 6 months is a rather short period to spend in a new environment.

These suggestions for flexibility may also in part address some of administrative issues encountered by the fellows, including the relocation challenges for those whose placement is in a different country.

5. Conclusion

The MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships' Feedback to Policy activity provided valuable insights from projects' participants on the non-academic placements, including the motivations and barriers for including this option in a MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships proposal and their experience with the implementation of the placement in their project.

The option to carry out a placement in a non-academic organisation is generally appreciated by the researchers for the opportunities it provides for their career development, building transferable skills and increasing the impact of their research beyond academia. The financial

incentive of extending the duration of the fellowship for the period of the placement is also regarded as somewhat effective.

However, some barriers remain. There is notably a need to continue to widely promote the non-academic placements to all potential applicants, as many current fellows were not aware of this opportunity or were made aware too late to include it in their proposal. Another difficulty encountered by fellows who wish to include a non-academic placement in their proposal is finding a host. Steps could be taken to further support fellows in this process of looking for a non-academic placement host, including **promoting existing resources** (e.g. Enterprise Europe Network, MSCA Matchmaking platform¹¹, etc.) but also exploring the possibility of making available a **list of previous placement hosts** to help applicants to identify potential partners. Targeted **promotion of the placement opportunity** to companies would also help to highlight the benefits of hosting a fellow and address some of their concerns.

The feedback from projects' participants also provided insights into recurring challenges encountered with the implementation of the placement, including administrative hurdles, organisational and financial issues, particularly for researchers with a placement in a different country from their main host institution. **Partnership agreements** between the main fellowship host and any associated partner, like the placement host, are important to set the conditions for the collaboration during the placement, including hosting conditions, transfer of funds for the researchers' activities or intellectual property rights for outputs stemming from the placement activities. Ultimately, project participants have also indicated that the placement rules currently offer limited flexibility during the implementation of the fellowship to adapt the placement to the project and the researcher's needs and to address any implementation challenges that can occur. The fellows' feedback includes suggestions for changes to improve the **flexibility of the placement** and the overall experience. These suggestions will feed into the broader reflection on the future of the MSCA programme and the MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships action in the next EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, notably to further promote intersectoral mobility for postdoctoral researchers.

¹¹ <https://www.b2match.com/e/radiance-msca>

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Main motivations to include a Non-Academic Placement in the MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships’ proposals
(regardless of whether the fellow included one or not in the submitted proposals)

Main motivations for the Non-Academic Placement	Develop additional scientific/ research skills and knowledge	Acquire additional transferable skills and knowledge	Open wider career opportunities in sectors outside academia	Opportunities for networking and developing collaborations with other research teams and organisations	Contribute to increasing the impact of the research project’s results	Continued funding for the period of the placement and extension of the fellowship’s duration	None, I do not see any advantage for my research or career development	Other	Total
<i>Scientific panels</i>									
CHE	43 61%	43 61%	56 80%	40 57%	26 37%	25 36%	1 1%	0 0%	70
ECO	4 44%	4 44%	6 67%	7 78%	3 33%	2 22%	0 0%	0 0%	9
ENG	37 53%	43 61%	64 91%	45 64%	39 56%	27 39%	0 0%	1 1%	70
ENV	24 48%	37 74%	42 84%	27 54%	28 56%	17 34%	2 4%	2 4%	50
LIF	68 49%	88 64%	119 86%	85 62%	58 42%	46 33%	4 3%	0 0%	138
MAT	3 30%	6 60%	6 60%	2 20%	5 50%	2 20%	2 20%	0 0%	10
PHY	31 49%	45 71%	54 86%	35 56%	27 43%	25 40%	3 5%	0 0%	63
SOC	64 39%	101 62%	128 79%	79 48%	82 50%	58 36%	11 7%	2 1%	163
<i>Gender</i>									
Man	138 48%	181 63%	222 77%	153 53%	131 45%	103 36%	16 6%	3 1%	289
Woman	124 47%	170 65%	235 89%	153 58%	127 48%	90 34%	5 2%	2 1%	263
Total	274 48%	367 64%	475 83%	320 56%	268 47%	202 35%	23 4%	5 1%	573

Annex 2: Main challenge or drawbacks for including a non-academic placement in a MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships' proposal

Main challenges or drawbacks for the Non-Academic Placement	There is no recognition of such experience in my field of research		Time constraints		Difficulty in finding a host organisation		Limited flexibility to adapt the placement to the development of my research project		Other		Total number of respondents
<i>Scientific panels</i>											
CHE	5	7%	25	37%	40	59%	20	29%	9	13%	68
ECO	1	13%	5	63%	5	63%	3	38%	0	0%	8
ENG	19	29%	26	40%	37	57%	29	45%	6	9%	65
ENV	11	22%	25	51%	23	47%	13	27%	7	14%	49
LIF	25	18%	59	43%	76	56%	62	46%	6	4%	136
MAT	7	78%	3	33%	1	11%	2	22%	1	11%	9
PHY	30	52%	23	40%	19	33%	19	33%	7	12%	58
SOC	60	41%	45	31%	77	53%	57	39%	9	6%	145
<i>Gender</i>											
Man	97	36%	110	41%	131	49%	109	41%	27	10%	269
Woman	56	22%	91	36%	140	56%	89	36%	15	6%	250
Grand Total	158	29%	211	39%	278	52%	205	38%	45	8%	538

Annex 3: Survey Questionnaire

Introduction

Under Horizon Europe (2021-2027), a new option to undertake a Non-Academic Placement* (or “NAP”) as part of a MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowship was introduced. The objective was to further encourage mobility across sectors for postdoctoral researchers, thereby stimulating innovation and knowledge transfer while expanding their career opportunities.

With this questionnaire, the European Commission and the European Research Executive Agency aim to collect feedback from funded fellows on the general motivations and barriers for including (or not) a Non-Academic Placement in a MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowship proposal.

All Horizon Europe MSCA Postdoctoral Fellows are invited to complete this questionnaire, whether they have included a Non-Academic Placement in their project or not.

The deadline for responses is **31st March 2025**.

The Commission strongly values the opinions of all fellows funded through the programme and your response to this questionnaire will help shape the future design of the MSCA.

Thank you in advance for your kind collaboration.

* Reminder: the MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowship non-academic placement had to be requested in the proposal. It consists of “an additional period of up to six months to support researchers opting for a placement at the end of the project to work on R&I projects in an organisation from the non-academic sector established in an EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country” (see MSCA Work Programmes 2021-2022 or 2023-2025 for more details).

Non-Academic Placements: Motivations and barriers

- 1) Does your project include a Non-Academic Placement (i.e. an additional period of up to six months to support researchers seeking a placement at the end of the project at a non-academic organisation in an EU Member State or Associated Country)?
 - Yes
 - No

- 2) If no, why not? [QUESTION ONLY VISIBLE IF RESPONDENT ANSWERED NO TO Q1]
 - I was not aware of the opportunity when I applied
 - I was not interested in having a Non-Academic Placement
 - I was interested, but I could not find a host organisation for the Non-Academic Placement
 - I was interested, but I could not include it for other reasons.

If other reason(s), please specify: _____

[QUESTION 3-5 ONLY VISIBLE FOR RESPONDENTS WHO ANSWERED YES TO Q1]

- 3) If yes, in which country is your Non-Academic Placement host institution? _____
- 4) In which sector is your Non-Academic Placement host institution?
- Public administration/government
 - Large enterprise (> 250 employees)
 - SME (\leq 250 employees)
 - Private non-profit
 - Other (i.e. museum, hospital, international organisation, etc...)

If other, please specify: _____

- 5) Please, add any additional feedback you may have on your experience of finding a host institution, including any challenges encountered, below:

[TO ALL RESPONDENTS]:

- 6) What would you identify as the main advantages of including a Non-Academic Placement in a MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowship? [MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTION]
- Develop additional scientific/research skills and knowledge
 - Acquire additional transferable skills and knowledge
 - Open wider career opportunities in sectors outside academia
 - Opportunities for networking and developing collaborations with other research teams and organisations
 - Contribute to increasing the impact of the research project's results
 - Continued funding for the period of the placement and extension of the fellowship's duration
 - None, I do not see any advantage for my research or career development
 - Other

If other, please specify: _____

- 7) Please provide any additional remark or comment you may have on main motivations for carrying out a Non-Academic Placement below:

- 8) What would you identify as the main challenges or drawbacks to including a Non-Academic Placement in a MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowship [MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTION]?
- There is no recognition of such experience in my field of research

- Time constraints
- Difficulty to find a host organisation
- Limited flexibility to adapt the placement to the development of my research project
- Other

If other please, specify: _____

- 9) Please provide any additional comment on drawbacks and challenges you have identified to carry out a Non-Academic Placement below:

Non-Academic Placements Implementation

Section only visible for respondent who answered yes to Q1 (on whether their project includes/d a non-academic placement)

- 10) Have you already started or completed your placement?

- Yes
- No

[QUESTION 11-13 ONLY VISIBLE FOR RESPONDENTS WHO ANSWERED YES TO Q10]

- 11) If yes, how would you assess your experience?

- very good
- good
- fair
- poor
- very poor

- 12) To what extent has the placement been beneficial for the exploitation of your research results?

- to a very large extent
- to a large extent
- to some extent
- to not much extent
- not at all

- 13) To what extent has the placement helped to expand your career perspectives?

- to a very large extent
- to a large extent
- to some extent
- to not much extent
- not at all

14) Please provide any other remark, including difficulties you may have encountered related to the placement implementation within your project, below:

Project and Participant Information

15) Type of MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowship

- European Fellowship
- Global Fellowship

16) Scientific panel

- CHE – Chemistry
- ECO - Economic Sciences
- ENG - Information Science and Engineering
- ENV - Environment and Geosciences
- LIF – Life Sciences
- MAT - Mathematics
- PHY – Physics
- SOC - Social Sciences and Humanities

17) Country of beneficiary/main host institution in Europe: _____

18) Gender of MSCA Postdoctoral Fellow

- Women
- Man
- Other
- Prefer not to say

19) Citizenship of MSCA Postdoctoral Fellow: _____

Annex 4: MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships Feedback to Policy: Non-Academic Placement Event Agenda

MSCA PF Non-Academic Placement (NAP) Event Agenda

4th September 2025, 10:00 – 12:00 (CET) Brussels time

Online meeting

Meeting link:

<https://ecconf.webex.com/ecconf/j.php?MTID=m708d9dbc08c1864f67ed37431c66f4d>

9

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 10:00 | Welcome <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcome Address, by Claire Morel, Head of MSCA Unit, DG EAC, European Commission |
| 10:10 | Tour de table of participants |
| 10:25 | Short presentations on current state of play with the NAP <ul style="list-style-type: none">• NAPs in PF proposals & projects, by Blagovesta Cholova, Project officer, MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships unit, REA, European Research Executive Agency• March 2025 survey results, by Anouk Lafortune, Policy officer, MSCA unit, DG EAC, European Commission |
| 10:40 | Open discussion with participants focused on three main themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>NAP in the proposal preparation: Motivations and barriers</i>• <i>NAP & project implementation</i>• <i>Impact of the NAP</i> |
| 11:50 | Next steps and Final Remark <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Next steps, by Anouk Lafortune• Final Remarks, by Fredrik Olsson-Hector, Head of Unit, MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships unit, European Research Executive Agency |



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