



# Results of MSCA end of fellowship evaluation questionnaires (Horizon 2020) 2025 Update

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# Results of MSCA end of fellowship evaluation questionnaires (Horizon 2020) 2025 Update

*Version: 1, Date of release: 14/05/2025*

## 1. Background

After their fellowship, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) fellows are requested to complete two short surveys covering various issues including their integration within the host institution and the impact of the fellowship on their skills development, career and employability.

The **evaluation questionnaire**<sup>1</sup> is completed immediately after the end of their fellowship to review their experience, skills acquired and immediate next steps after their MSCA project.

The **follow-up questionnaire**<sup>2</sup> is submitted two years after the fellowship to gather further information on the more mid and long-term impact of the fellowship and the career trajectories of the fellows since.

Since 2021, regular reports have been published presenting the updated results and key findings from these questionnaires<sup>3</sup>.

This 2025 report provides an update on the results of these surveys for projects funded Horizon 2020<sup>4</sup>. This year's report focuses particularly on careers after the MSCA fellowship.

## 2. Overview of the sample

As of November 2024, there were over 25 000 respondents for the evaluation questionnaire and over 5 000 respondents for the follow-up questionnaire. There has been a significant increase in the number of responses to the latter questionnaire in 2024<sup>5</sup>, following a more active campaign to remind former MSCA participants to complete the questionnaire two years after their fellowship. This initiative will be continued to increase response rate for the follow-up questionnaire.

Fellows from all actions and at different career stages are represented in both samples. The table below presents the distribution of respondents by action for both questionnaires. The sample also covers all scientific fields. Altogether just under 42% of

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<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/Evaluation\\_for\\_MSC\\_fellows](https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/Evaluation_for_MSC_fellows)

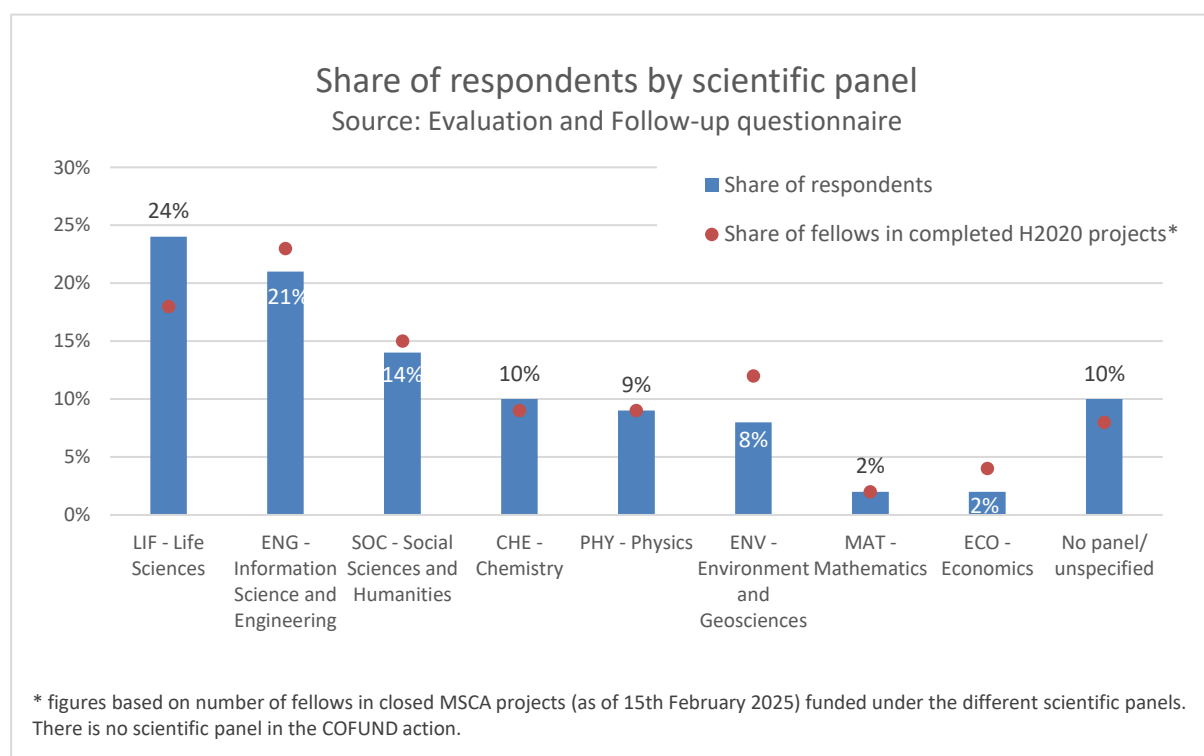
<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/MSCA\\_Follow-up\\_Questionnaire\\_2\\_years\\_after\\_end\\_of\\_fellowship](https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/MSCA_Follow-up_Questionnaire_2_years_after_end_of_fellowship)

<sup>3</sup> <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/cae806b5-7d63-11eb-9ac9-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

<sup>4</sup> at present the sample is too small for projects and fellow funded under Horizon Europe

<sup>5</sup> from 2400 responses in the previous report. See: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/cae806b5-7d63-11eb-9ac9-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

Number of responses by type of actions	Evaluation Questionnaire within three months after end of fellowship (number and share of respondents)		Follow-up Questionnaire two years after end of fellowship (number and share of respondents)	
<b>TOTAL SAMPLE</b>	25 035	(100%)	5 012	(100%)
<b>MSCA Innovative Training Network (ITN)</b> <i>Doctoral researchers</i>	8 411	(33.6%)	1214	(24.2%)
<b>MSCA Individual Fellowships (IF)</b> <i>Experienced researchers (postdocs or above)</i>	1 854	(7.4%)	1275	(25.4%)
<b>MSCA Research and Innovation Staff Exchanges (RISE)</b>	12 407	(49.6%)	2 035	(40.6%)
<i>Doctoral researchers</i>	4 274		689	
<i>Experienced researchers (postdocs and above)</i>	6 101		983	
<i>Non-research staff</i>	984		167	
<b>MSCA COFUND</b>	2 363	(9.4%)	488	(9.7%)
<i>COFUND-DP (Doctoral researchers)</i>	796		154	
<i>COFUND-FP (Experienced researchers)</i>	1430		312	



respondents are women, which mirrors the overall share of women participating in the MSCA under Horizon 2020 (also 42%).

### 3. Impact of MSCA fellowship on training and skill development

Overall, 86% of respondents rated the training provided during their MSCA fellowship as good or very good, with another 11% considering it of fair quality.

A large majority of MSCA fellows rated highly the supervision they received during their MSCA project, with 85% considering it good or very good. By contrast, around 5% of respondents rated it as poor or very poor. The *MSCA Guidelines on Supervision*<sup>6</sup> were introduced in 2021 as a set of recommendations to be applied on a best-effort basis by participants in the programme – both individuals and institutions – in order to further help institutions and supervisors in guiding MSCA researchers. The guidelines were recently updated to ensure their continued relevance and efforts are ongoing to increase their visibility.

The MSCA also provide opportunities to carry out short-term secondments as part of the training of researchers, for them to develop new experiences, knowledge and skills. Excluding MSCA Research and Innovation Staff Exchange (RISE) participants, since the action is designed to facilitate short-term secondments and exchanges of staff, nearly three quarters (74.2%) of fellows in MSCA Innovative Training Networks (ITN), Individual Fellowships (IF) and COFUND were able to go on at least one secondment or spend time in another institution other than their main host institution during their fellowship. Through these secondments fellows acquire international, interdisciplinary or cross-sectoral experiences that contribute to their skills development and careers afterwards.

Around one third of fellows spent time in the non-academic sector during their fellowship, mostly as part of short secondments. The share is highest among ITN (41%) and RISE (33%) respondents, followed by COFUND (18%) and the lowest among IF fellows (14%). Two years later, nearly all fellows (95%) who undertook at least part of their fellowship outside academia considered that the experience positively contributed to their career afterwards. Indeed, 54% considered that the experience outside academia had been to a very large or large extent beneficial for their career since the fellowship.

Respondents were asked to assess the impact of the fellowship on a range of skills. They could choose between “strongly increased”, “increased”, “unchanged as already aware” and “unchanged as the fellowship did not help”. Combining the categories “increased” and “strongly increased”, satisfaction rates are relatively high:

- Research knowledge/expertise – 96.0%
- Ability to build international/intersectoral partnerships – 92.2%
- Presentation/communications – 88.2%
- Quality of scientific output – 85.6%
- Project management – 83.0%
- Awareness of open access – 76.1%

<sup>6</sup> See <https://marie-sklodowska-curie-actions.ec.europa.eu/about-msca/msca-guidelines-on-supervision#:~:text=As%20the%20EU%E2%80%99s%20flagship%20programme%20for%20the%20mobility,for%20individuals%20and%20institutions%20who%20receive%20MSCA%20funding.>

- Grant and proposal writing – 66.8%
- IPR knowledge – 60.4%

Two years later, 98,7% of fellows have used the skills acquired during the MSCA fellowship in their career since. Nearly three quarters of respondents (71.9%) used the skills they developed to a large or very large extent.

The skills acquired during the MSCA project that fellows reported applying most in their career were presentation and communication skills, networking, particularly for international collaborations but also for developing cross-sectoral partnerships, as well as increased quality of their scientific output.

**Most fellows report a high level of satisfaction with the quality of the training and the relevance of the skills acquired for their career afterwards. The programme has recently reviewed its *MSCA Guidelines on Supervision* to ensure the guidelines remain up-to-date and continue to promote effective supervision.**

## 4. Career trajectory after the MSCA: overview

Findings from the evaluation questionnaire indicate that around 91% of all former fellows considered that the MSCA fellowship had a good or very good impact on their professional development. Around 2% of the survey respondents considered the impact on their professional development poor or very poor, and 7% fair.

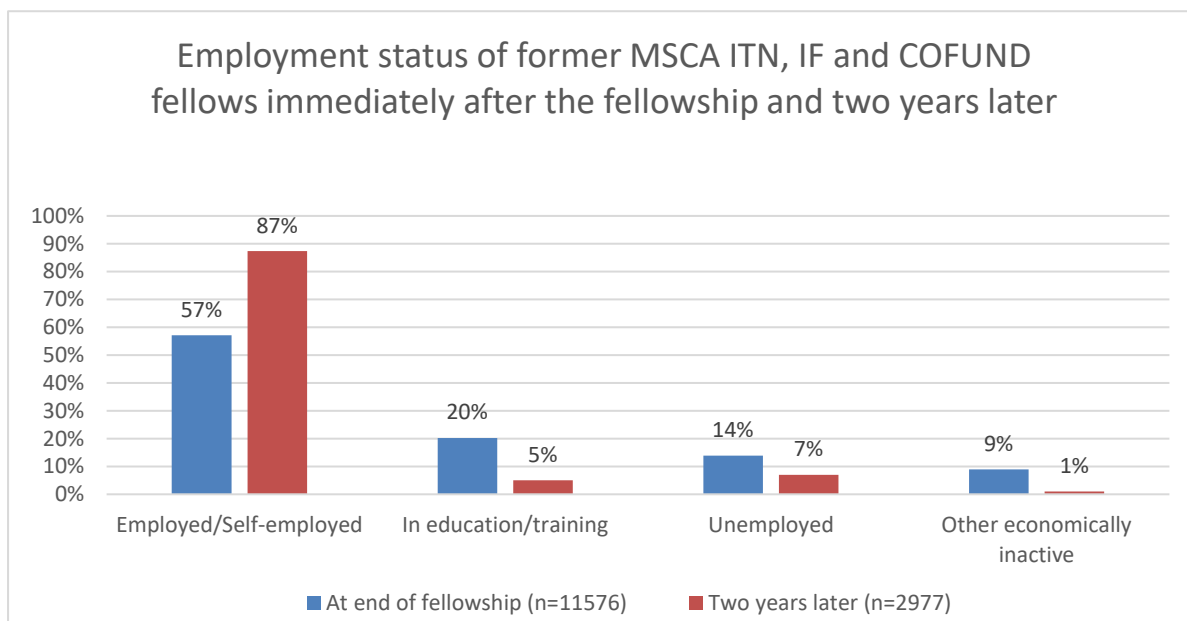
The evaluation questionnaire provides figures on ITN, COFUND and IF fellows' employment at the time of completion of their fellowship<sup>7</sup>. Overall, within three months after the end of their MSCA fellowship, 57% among them had already found employment, 20% were in education/training, 14% unemployed and 9% inactive for other reasons (i.e. on parental leave, not looking for employment, etc.). The share of former fellows who have immediately found employment after the fellowship varies across actions and career stages, with former doctoral candidates more likely to be unemployed during that period and/or still finalising their PhD. Overall, 15% of ITN and 17% of COFUND doctoral candidates declared themselves unemployed immediately after the fellowship (vs 10% for experienced researchers in both IF and COFUND).

Two years later, the share of former ITN, COFUND and IF fellows in employment is significantly higher with 87% of respondents either employed or self-employed, 5% in education/training and 7% unemployed at the time of completing the follow-up questionnaire. Among fellows employed, 44% were employed under permanent or indefinite contracts, 13% under temporary contracts of more than 3 years, 28% under contracts between 1 and 3 years, and 15% under contracts of up to 1 year. Experienced researchers tended to have a lower unemployment rate compared to former MSCA doctoral candidates (2% vs 9%). Among those employed, experienced researchers were also more likely to have a permanent or indefinite contracts than former doctoral researchers (48% vs 38%), with a lower share in short-term, up to one year contract (11% vs 21% for former doctoral researchers).

<sup>7</sup> Due to the specificity of the action, RISE participants were exempt from the question on employment status, in the evaluation questionnaire. RISE supports secondments of already recruited staff members. Their employment is therefore irrespective of the MSCA project and the secondment period.



The large majority of employed former MSCA researchers (90%) still worked in research and innovation, two years after the fellowship, both within and outside academia. Among employed fellows, 57% considered that the fellowship contributed to a large or very large extent to obtaining their present position. Indeed, 47% of employed fellows were working in one of the institutions involved in their MSCA fellowship two years later. Beside employment, 80% of all fellows still actively collaborated with organisations and researchers involved in their MSCA fellowship, two years later.



### From MSCA to the ERC (European Research Council)

The results of the survey tend to support previous findings on the links between MSCA IF and ERC grants. Around 25% of MSCA IF respondents had applied to an ERC grant in the first two years after the fellowship. Among those who already knew the results of their ERC application when completing the questionnaire (n=266), 44 had been selected for an ERC grant, representing a 16.5% success rate. This is slightly higher than the general success rates of ERC grants, usually around 13%-14% depending on the year and the scheme. The results are very similar to those obtained by the FP7 ex post and Horizon 2020 independent interim evaluation of MSCA in 2017<sup>8</sup>.

**The MSCA have a strong positive impact on the career trajectories of fellows and their employability. The large majority of fellows continue to work in research and innovation after the fellowship and mobilise the skills and network they have developed through MSCA projects.**

<sup>8</sup> See <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/98885a02-c849-11e7-9b01-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

## 5. Career trajectory after the MSCA: geographical mobility

Most MSCA fellows stay in Europe after the fellowship. Among ITN, IF and COFUND fellows employed immediately after their fellowship, over 69% were working in EU-27 countries, 13% in the United Kingdom, 8% in Horizon 2020 associated countries and just below 10% in non-associated third countries.

The figures remain stable two years later. There were still 69% of former ITN, IF and COFUND fellows working or living within the EU-27 and 13% in third countries. Among those based outside Europe two years after the fellowship, most (76%) had a citizenship from a third country. The results also indicate that the majority of former fellows from third countries had remained in Europe, with 51% still in EU-27 countries, 12% in the United Kingdom and 4% in Horizon 2020 associated countries.

The table on the right hand-side provides figures based on the follow-up questionnaire's responses of former fellows still based in the host country of their MSCA fellowship two years later. The retention of fellows in their MSCA project host country varies across countries but is generally quite high. More than 10 countries had retained 50% or more of the MSCA fellows they had hosted two years after the end of the fellowship.

Barriers mentioned by fellows for staying in Europe after the fellowship included difficulties in finding a job after the fellowship in the MSCA host country or elsewhere in Europe, difficulty obtaining or extending their visa for non-European researchers and heavy bureaucracy and paperwork linked to carrying out research in Europe.

**Share of former MSCA ITN, IF and COFUND fellows still based in the country of their MSCA main host institution two years after**

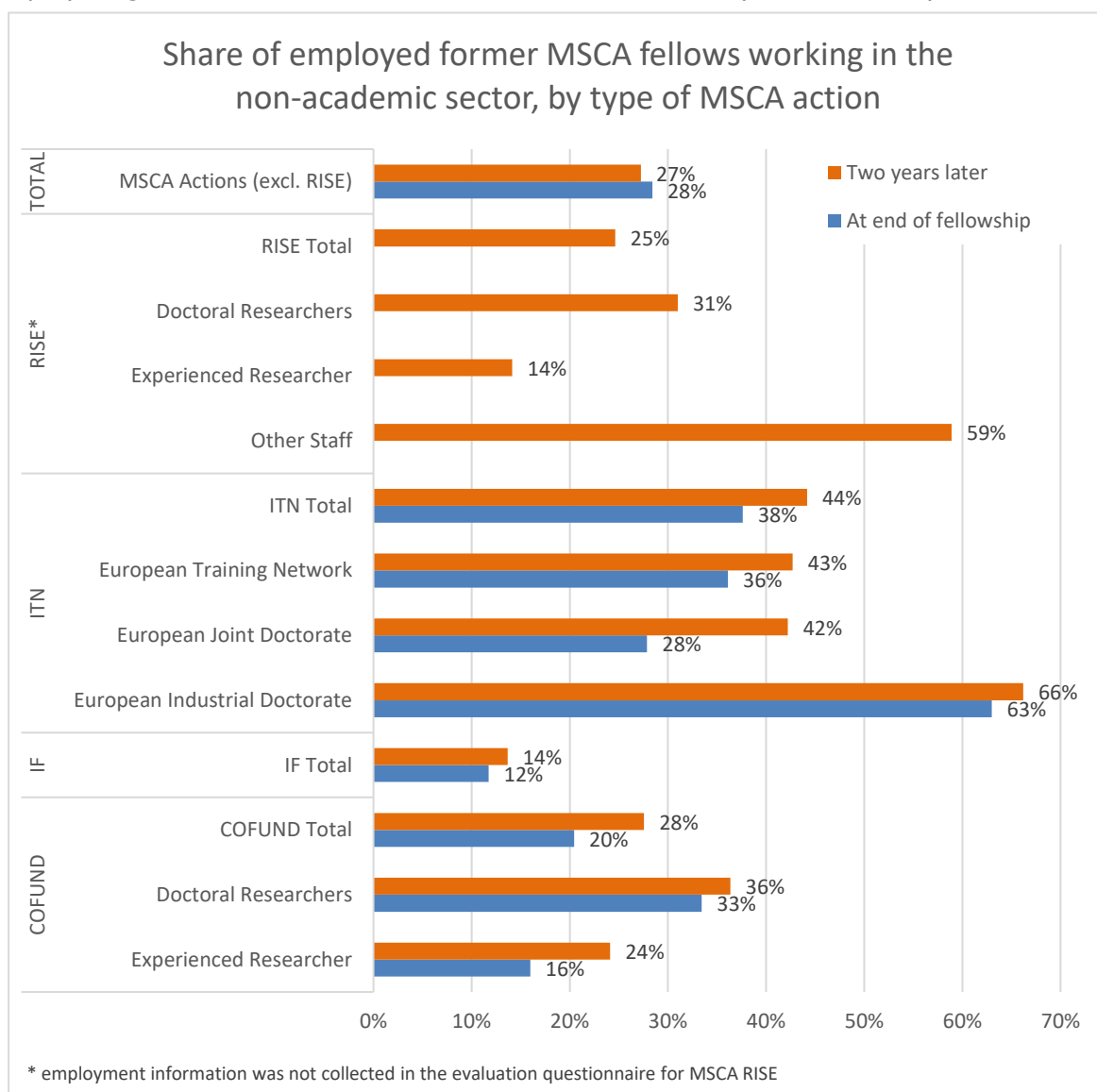
Country of MSCA main hosting institution*	Number of follow-up questionnaire respondents	Share still in the same country two years after the fellowship
Estonia	6	83%
Turkey	4	75%
Sweden	94	65%
Spain	353	59%
Finland	44	57%
Slovenia	23	57%
Norway	47	55%
Austria	58	55%
Netherlands	163	53%
Israel	29	52%
Cyprus	12	50%
Greece	29	48%
Ireland	88	48%
France	233	47%
Portugal	48	46%
Germany	297	46%
Switzerland	116	46%
United Kingdom	417	44%
Italy	222	43%
Denmark	130	42%
Belgium	168	39%
Czechia	31	39%
Poland	34	35%
Romania	6	33%
Serbia	7	29%
Luxembourg	11	27%
Hungary	10	20%
Bulgaria	4	0%
Croatia	3	0%

\* Countries with a sample of only two or less respondents were not included in the table

**The MSCA programme has been successful in attracting and retaining European and international research and innovation talents in Europe. Most MSCA fellows stay in Europe after their fellowship. The survey results suggest that the retention of researchers afterwards varies notably in different host countries and depends among other reasons on employment prospects and administrative issues encountered, particularly for non-European researchers.**

## 6. Career trajectory after the MSCA by sector

Most former fellows continue to work in academia after their MSCA project. Among those employed, 72% of ITN, COFUND and IF former fellows were working within academia immediately after the fellowship and 73% two years later. The share is generally lower among former doctoral fellows than experienced MSCA researchers. Two years after, for instance, the share among employed ITN fellows still working in academia was 56% compared to 86% for former IF fellows. Unsurprisingly the lowest share is found among employed graduates from ITN industrial doctorates. They were already 63% working



outside academia within three months after their MSCA fellowship and 66% two years later.

The graph above presents the share of former fellows from different MSCA actions employed in the non-academic sector. Among ITN, IF and COFUND fellows working outside academia, the main employers immediately after the fellowship were large enterprises (43%) and SMEs (26%), followed by private nonprofit (10%), public administration (8%) and other sectors (e.g. international organisations, hospitals, museums, etc.) (13%). Two years later, while large enterprises and SMEs remain the main employers, a slightly higher share of respondents work either in public administrations (10%), and other non-academic sectors (e.g. international organisations, hospitals, museums, etc.) (25%).

The types of employment contracts tend to vary according to the sector of employment. Academia is the sector with the lowest share of former MSCA fellows on permanent or indefinite contracts. Among those employed in academia two years after their fellowship, 33% had a permanent or indefinite contract, 17% had a temporary contract of more than 3 years, 33% a contract lasting between 1 and 3 years, and 17% a contract of up to 1 year. The share under permanent or indefinite contract was higher among experienced researchers (43%) than among former doctoral researchers (13%).

**Duration of employment contracts of MSCA fellows two years after the fellowship, by sector of employment**

Sector of employment	Up to 1 year	More than 1 year and up to 3 years	More than 3 years	Permanent or indefinite contract	Sample of respondents
<b>Academia (higher education, public research institute)</b>	17%	33%	17%	33%	1798
Large enterprise	11%	7%	1%	82%	222
Small and Medium Enterprise (SME)	9%	10%	1%	80%	137
Private non-profit	12%	21%	3%	64%	73
Public administration/ government	17%	27%	8%	48%	71
International organisation	10%	21%	3%	66%	68
Other sector	21%	12%	1%	66%	100
All respondents	16%	28%	13%	44%	2542

By contrast, large enterprises and SMEs have the largest share of former fellows employed under a permanent or indefinite contract, with 82% and 80% respectively, while the share in nearly all other sectors is above 60% (with the exception of public administrations with 48%).

Since most former MSCA fellows pursue a career in academia after their fellowship, they are particularly affected by the lower level of job security in the sector. In 2025, the European Commission will launch a "Choose Europe for Science" pilot call under MSCA

which will aim to address the issue of job precarity and promote more attractive and sustainable research careers in Europe.

**A large share of MSCA fellows pursue a career in academia after the MSCA project. However, their employment contracts tend to be more short-term than those in other sectors. The MSCA continue to promote sustainable careers in research and innovation under Horizon Europe.**

## 7. Final remarks

*The results presented in this report are based on responses from researchers supported under Horizon 2020 (2014-2020) funded projects, as there are still few fellowships completed under Horizon Europe. The Horizon Europe end-of-fellowship questionnaires results will be analysed in future reports once a sufficient sample is available.*

