

New requirements for MSCA-ITN-2020 proposals

Changes in the Guide for Applicants and Standard Proposal Template from 2019 to 2020

The content of this document is based on the Horizon 2020 MSCA-ITN *Guide for Applicants* (GfA) and the *Standard Proposal Template* (SPT) as of 12/09/2019.



Horizon 2020 is the biggest EU Research and Innovation programme ever with nearly €80 billion of funding available over 7 years (2014 to 2020) – in addition to the private investment that this money will attract. It promises more breakthroughs, discoveries and world-firsts by taking great ideas from the lab to the market.¹

Call: H2020-MSCA-ITN-2020

Types of action: MSCA-ITN-ETN European Training Networks
MSCA-ITN-EJD European Joint Doctorates
MSCA-ITN-EID European Industrial Doctorates

Submission deadline: 14 January 2020

Main Changes

Overview of changes from version 4.0 (valid for 2019) to version 5.0 (valid for 2020), including changes added in October 2018 (version 4.1 2019), as defined by the European Commission.

- Guide for Applicants
- Standard Proposal Template

Guide for Applicants for ITNs 2020

Detailed overview of changes in the GfA (including Part A, Part B1 and Part B2) from 2019 to 2020



Main Changes

The main changes are defined by the European Commission in the Guide for Applicants as well as the Standard Proposal Template in the table “History of Changes”.

Guide for Applicants

Changes in the GfA (version 4.1 2019; 02.10.2018)		GfA page no.
Clarification of EJD definition		10-11
Correction of the EID example to reflect the 30% secondment rule to partner organisations		23-24
Changes in the GfA (version 5.0 2020; 12.09.2019)		GfA page no.
Updated definitions (Academic, Non-Academic sectors, secondments)		6-7
Clarification of EJD requirement on supported researchers		11
Clarification of secondments		24
Updated instructions for Institutional Letter of Commitment (EJD)		12,13,46
Updated instructions for partner organisation Letter of Commitment and new Template		15,45,67
Footnote added on recruitment in EID		21
Updated Note on visa costs		30-31
Update of Operational Capacity assessment during evaluations		39
Updates in the evaluation process description		40-41
Update of the Resubmission procedure		44
Clarification added on the List of Participating Organisations and updated table regarding participation in other projects or similar proposals submitted under the same call.		50,62

Standard Proposal Template for the H2020-MSCA-ITN-2020 call

Changes in Part A (12.09.2019)
PIC for Partner Organisations is still highly recommended (but not mandatory)

Changes in Part B (12.09.2019)
Tables should not be used to circumvent the minimum font size indicated for the main text
<p>B2 – 5. Participating Organisations</p> <p><u>Previous Involvement in Research and Training Programmes, including ITN</u> Detail any relevant EU, national or international research and training actions/projects in which the beneficiary has previously participated. Please clearly mention any previous involvement in ITN funded project(s), including project(s) acronym and reference number.</p> <p><u>Current Involvement in Research and Training Programmes, including ITN</u> Detail any relevant EU, national or international research and training actions/projects in which the beneficiary is currently participating. Please clearly mention any current involvement in ongoing ITN funded project(s), including project(s) acronym and reference number.</p> <p><u>Submission of similar proposals under the same H2020-MSCA-ITN-2020 call</u> Please declare if you have submitted other similar proposals (in terms of participants or research objectives) under the same H2020-MSCA-ITN-2020 call.</p>
<p>B2 – 7. Letters of Commitment</p> <p>Mandatory template for letters of commitment for partner organisations: Annex 6.a – Template of Commitment letter for ITN partner organisations</p>

Guide for Applicants for ITNs 2019

Detailed comparison between the Guide for Applicants (GfA) version 4.0 – 2019 (13 September 2018) and the latest version 5.0 – 2020 (12 September 2019).

- Changes are sorted by the type of ITN action/implementation mode affected by the change.
- Changes in the text of the GfA (e.g. additions, rewording) are highlighted in **bold**.
- Explanations added by accelopment for clarification and orientation are in *italics*.

Changes affecting all ITN implementation modes (ETN, EID and EJD)

Changes	GfA page no.
<p>Definitions used throughout this Guide:</p> <p>Academic Sector means public or private higher education establishments awarding academic degrees, public or private non-profit research organisations for whom one of the main objectives is to pursue research or technological development, and international European interest organisation as they are defined in Article 2.1(12) of the Horizon 2020 Rules for Participation (Regulation No 1290/2013).</p> <p>Non-Academic Sector means any socio-economic actor not included in the academic sector and fulfilling the requirements of the Horizon 2020 Rules for Participation (Regulation No 1290/2013). This includes all fields of future workplaces of researchers, from industry to business, government, civil society organisations, cultural institutions, hospitals etc.</p> <p>Secondment: is a period of research training with another beneficiary, its entities with a capital or legal link, or a partner organisation implemented to further enrich the training experience of a researcher. Secondments are an integral part of the research proposal and must be described in the proposal. They imply mobility to a beneficiary or partner organisation with specific supervision arrangements.</p>	6-7
<p>2.2 Partner Organisations</p> <p>Each partner organisation must include an up-to-date letter of commitment in Part B.7 of the proposal to ensure their real and active participation in the proposed network. Partner Organisations must follow the template letter included in this guide in Annex 6.a. The expert evaluators will disregard the contribution of any partner organisation for which no letter of commitment is submitted. The precise role of each partner organisation should also be clearly described in the proposal. There is no pre-defined number of partner organisations; however, this number should be sound and related to the real needs of the project. In case the letter does not follow the template or fails to give enough information on the partner organisation’s role and/or enough assurance on their commitment in the project (e.g. no signature, wrong proposal references, outdated letter...), the experts may penalise the proposal on these aspects under the implementation evaluation criterion.</p> <p><i>Before, there was no specific template for these letters.</i></p>	14-15
<p>4.2 Secondments</p> <p>Secondments of the researcher to other beneficiaries and partner organisations are encouraged, but should be relevant, feasible and beneficial for the researchers, and in line with the project objectives. They are an integral part of the research proposal and must be described in the proposal. Any subsequent changes in the secondment plan during the project implementation must be approved by the REA.</p> <p>[...]</p>	23

During their secondment, researchers receive supervision and training at the premises of the receiving beneficiary, its entities with a capital or legal link, or partner organisation. The premises of these institutions must be independent from each other and therefore the secondment must involve physical mobility of the fellow, with specific supervision arrangements . Secondments should be differentiated from short visits, i.e. of a few days.	24
In all cases, the beneficiaries must ensure that the researcher is covered under the social security scheme which is applied to employed workers within the country of the beneficiary, or under a social security scheme providing at least sickness insurance and parental benefits, coverage of invalidity and accidents at work and occupational diseases, as well as unemployment insurance , covering the researcher in every place of implementation of the ITN activities.	28
Part-time employment for personal or family reasons can be accepted with prior agreement with the REA (the minimum MSCA working time must always be at least 50%). In this case costs will be reported as pro-rata of the fulltime (30 days/month) unit cost.	28
Note: all entry visa costs (and renewals) for the recruited researcher and their family (where applicable) must be covered from institutional costs (both at the time of recruitment, even if incurred before the recruitment date , and in case of secondments).	29
Overview Table <i>Budget changes</i> ETN: €445 million, EID: €40 million, EJD: €45 million	32
Indicative timetable for this call	33
Publication of call:	13 September 2018
Deadline for submission of proposals	15 January 2019 at 17:00:00, Brussels local time
Evaluation of proposals	February-April 2019
Information on the outcome of the evaluation	June 2019
Indicative date for the signing of Grant Agreements	September 2019
Annex 2 – Evaluation Criteria and Procedure In each of the ten panels (eight scientific areas + one for EID and one for EJD) a Chairperson ("Chair"), assisted by several Vice-Chairs (depending on the size of the panel) will assist REA staff with the management of the evaluation. Chairs and Vice-Chairs are distinguished members of the scientific community who do not evaluate proposals. Their tasks include the following: finalising the assignment of three experts to each proposal, providing guidance to evaluators, checking the quality and consistency of the experts' reports, drafting the consensus report, attending the panel review meetings to endorse the final ranked lists of proposals for funding.	35
Should the experts evaluating the proposal reach a consensus that one or more applicants lack sufficient operational capacity to carry out the tasks assigned to them, the experts will continue to evaluate the proposal without disregarding their activities and their estimated budget . The participation of the applicant lacking sufficient operational capacity will be checked again at the Grant Agreement Preparation phase by REA services, should the proposal be selected for funding.	38
Annex 4 – Instructions for Drafting Part B of the Proposal For the tables, the font size chosen must be clearly legible by the expert evaluators. The minimum font size is therefore 8 points. Tables should not be used to circumvent the minimum font size indicated for the main text . Literature references should be listed in footnotes, font size 8. All footnotes will count towards the page limit.	45

<p>2. Letters of Commitment</p> <p>Partner organisations must include a letter of commitment in Part B (document 2) of the proposal to ensure their real and active participation in the proposed network. Such letters must follow the template given in Annex 6.a and should be signed by an authorized person, scanned and included in section B.7. The expert evaluators will be instructed to disregard the contribution of any partner organisations for which no such evidence of commitment is submitted. In case the letter does not follow the template or fail to give enough information on the partner organisation’s role and/or enough assurance on their commitment in the project (e.g. no signature, wrong proposal references, outdated letter...), the experts may penalise the proposal on these aspects under the implementation evaluation criterion.</p>	45																		
<p>LIST OF PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS (max. 2 pages)</p> <p>Please provide a list of the consortium's members (both beneficiaries and partner organisations) indicating the legal entity, the department carrying out the work and the scientist-in-charge of the action. Entities with a capital or legal link should be added together with the linked beneficiary.</p>	50																		
<p>All organisations (whether beneficiaries or partner organisations) must complete the appropriate table below. Complete one table of maximum one page per beneficiary and half a page per partner organisation (minimum font size: 8). Entities with a capital or legal link should be described together with the linked beneficiary.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="113 797 1267 1684"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2" data-bbox="113 797 1267 831">Beneficiary Legal Name:</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="113 831 475 864">General Description</td> <td data-bbox="475 831 1267 864"><i>Short description of the activities relevant to the action</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="113 864 475 965">Role and Commitment of key persons (including supervisors)</td> <td data-bbox="475 864 1267 965"><i>Including names, title and the intended extent of involvement in the action (in percentage of full-time employment) of the key scientific staff who will be involved in the research, training and supervision</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="113 965 475 1095">Key Research Facilities, Infrastructure and Equipment</td> <td data-bbox="475 965 1267 1095"><i>Outline the key facilities and infrastructure available and demonstrate that each team has sufficient capacity to host and/or offer a suitable environment for supervising the research and training of the recruited Early-Stage Researchers</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="113 1095 475 1225">Status of Research Premises</td> <td data-bbox="475 1095 1267 1225"><i>Please explain the status of the beneficiary's research facilities – i.e. are they owned by the beneficiary or rented by it? 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7. Letters of Commitment Letters of commitment from partner organisations should be on headed paper and signed in order to demonstrate the credibility of the organisation's commitment to the ITN. Please find a specific template for these letters in Annex 6.a.	64
Annex 6.a – Template of Commitment letter for ITN partner organisations - On headed paper of the entity - Beyond any additional information that the participating organisation wishes to indicate in its Letter of institutional commitment, the following text should appear in all its parts and with no modifications: I undersigned, in my quality of, commit to set up all necessary provisions to participate as partner organisation in the proposal submitted within the call H2020-MSCA-ITN-2020 should the proposal be funded. On behalf of [name of the entity], I also confirm that we will participate and contribute to the research, innovation and training activities as planned in this project. In particular, our [name of the entity] will be involved in ... [Free field for any additional information that the participating organisation wishes to indicate in order to describe its role and contribution to the project]. I hereby declare that I am entitled to commit into this process the entity I represent. <p style="text-align: right;">Name, date, signature</p>	66

Changes affecting only European Training Networks (ETN)

Changes	GfA page no.
1.2 Structure [...] ETN proposals will be ranked in eight scientific panels with a total budget of around € 445 million. <i>The total budget for ETN in 2019 was € 400 million.</i>	9

Changes affecting only European Joint Doctorates (EJD)

Changes	GfA page no.
All supported early-stage researchers, within an EJD, must be enrolled in a joint, double or multiple doctoral degree. At least two-thirds of the supported early-stage researchers within an EJD must be enrolled in a joint, double or multiple degree within Europe, i.e. between two or more beneficiaries/partner organisations established in an MS or AC. The remaining supported researchers must also be enrolled in a programme that results in a joint, double or multiple degree awarded by at least one European participating organisation (MS/AC). In order to allow the REA to check the compliance with the above-mentioned eligibility rule, applicants must indicate at proposal stage for all supported researchers, from which institution(s) they are supposed to receive the degree(s).	11
The consortium should propose a joint doctoral programme aiming at overcoming national, sectoral and inter-disciplinary boundaries in doctoral research, promoting the mobility of doctoral candidates, and leading to lasting and structured doctoral-level cooperation/degrees between the beneficiaries.	12

<p>The participating organisations must demonstrate clearly that the joint scheme will contribute to improving the overall quality of doctoral education and research in Europe, and will lead to the award of a joint, double or multiple degree recognised or accredited by the respective national authorities. As such, letters of institutional commitment signed by an authorised legal representative must be included in Part B.7 of the proposal from each of the beneficiaries/partner organisations that would award the (joint, double or multiple) doctoral degrees stating their agreement to ensure the provision of such degrees should the proposal receive funding. Applicants must follow the template letter included in this guide in Annex 6.b. In case the letter does not follow in full the template or fails to give enough assurance on the commitment in the project (e.g. no signature, wrong proposal references, outdated letter...), the experts may penalise the proposal on these aspects under the implementation evaluation criterion. Missing letters of institutional commitment will lead to the exclusion of the entity, which might affect the eligibility of the proposal.</p>	12
<p>Example: a consortium composed of academic institutions entitled to deliver doctoral degrees based in Italy, Luxembourg, Ireland, Poland and Hungary proposes an EJD in political science examining the rise of regional parties in Europe. Partner organisations in three other countries offer additional secondment opportunities and transferable skills training. Each recruited fellow will be supervised by experts from at least two different beneficiaries and/or partner organisations and will participate both in common, programme-wide training courses as well as specialised, tailored courses specific to their needs. Secondments will be targeted according to the expertise available at each of the participating organisations and will be used to gather data and conduct expert interviews as well as to attend courses and training modules not available at other institutions. Skills training will include modules on qualitative and quantitative research methods, presentation skills, and consulting methodologies. The fellows' research will be recognised by two of the academic institutions and will lead to the award of a joint doctoral degree delivered by and recognised in at least two different countries.</p>	12-13
<p>EJD proposals will be ranked in eight scientific panels with a total budget of around € 45 million. <i>The total budget for ETN in 2019 was € 35 million.</i></p>	13
<p>4.2 Secondments [...] In EJD it is expected that the researchers will need to spend at least the minimum period of time required to be eligible to enrol in a doctoral degree and defend the doctoral thesis at the corresponding academic participating organisations. This will vary according to the institution and country in question. The limitation of secondments to 30% of the total recruitment period does not apply to EJD insofar as time spent at other participating organisations occurs in line with the proposal description.</p>	25

Changes affecting only European Industrial Doctorates (EID)

Changes	GfA page no.
<p>1.2 Structure [...]</p> <p>European Industrial Doctorates (EID) EID aims to meet the objectives of ITN in particular by involving the non-academic sector in doctoral training so that skills better match public and private sector needs. An EID must be composed of at least two independent beneficiaries established in two different MS or AC. At least one beneficiary must come from the academic sector and at least one beneficiary from the non-academic sector, primarily enterprises (including SMEs). Additional beneficiaries and partner organisations can come from any sector. However, should none of the academic beneficiaries be entitled to award a doctoral degree, an institution entitled to award a doctoral degree must be associated as a partner organisation or as an entity with a capital or legal link.</p>	9
<p>Each recruited researcher must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spend at least 50% of their time in the non-academic sector. Any inter-sectoral mobility between academic and non-academic beneficiaries must be international (i.e. between beneficiaries established in different countries). The total secondment duration to partner organisations (irrespective of the sector) is limited to a maximum of 30% of the fellowship duration. The specific percentage of time that each researcher will spend at each institution should therefore be indicated in the proposal. <p>Example: an academic research institution in Austria, a university in Sweden and a research-performing enterprise in Cyprus propose an EID in the field of medical devices based on nanotechnology. The academic research institution in Austria cannot award doctoral degrees therefore the ESRs will be enrolled at the university in Sweden. The researchers will spend 50% of their time at the enterprise in Cyprus with their remaining time split between the research institution in Austria and the university in Sweden. Training will be offered by all three beneficiaries, with short-term secondment opportunities and transferable skills training offered by a number of other partner organisations.</p> <p>Example: A researcher is recruited by a university in Italy (beneficiary 1) and spends 40% of the doctoral training there. In addition, he/she spends 40% of the fellowship at a company in France (beneficiary 2) and 20% at a company in Italy (partner organisation). The mobility between beneficiary 1 and beneficiary 2 is international (from Italy to France) and therefore eligible. The secondment to the partner organisation takes place within the same country as the academic beneficiary (Italy), but it is also eligible as it is shorter than the 30% limit for secondments to partner organisations.</p> <p><i>The example can be found in version 4.0 already, only position in the document has changed.</i></p>	10
<p>1.2 Structure [...]</p> <p>EID proposals will be ranked in eight scientific panels with a total budget of around € 40 million. <i>The total budget for ETN in 2019 was € 35 million.</i></p>	10