

EURODOC survey on the Doctorate¹ structure across Europe (version May 2018)
prepared by the EURODOC Doctoral Training Working Group

EU-H2020-MSCA-ITN-European Training Networks

This is a summary of the doctoral programme described under European Training Networks (ETNs), a mode of Innovative Training Networks (ITNs), which are Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions (MSCAs) under the Horizon 2020 programme (H2020) of the European Union (EU).

The MSCAs aim to support the career development and training of researchers – with a focus on innovation skills – in all scientific disciplines through interdisciplinary, international and intersectoral mobility.

ITNs offer innovative doctoral-level training providing a range of skills in order to maximise employability. The specific objectives of the MSCA-ITNs are (in accordance with Principles for Innovative Doctoral Training²):

- to train a new generation of creative, entrepreneurial, and innovative early-stage researchers able to face current and future challenges and to convert knowledge and ideas into products and services for economic and social benefit.
- to raise excellence and structure research and doctoral training, extending the traditional academic research training setting, incorporating the elements of Open Science and equipping researchers with the right combination of research-related and transferable competences.
- to provide enhanced career perspectives in both the academic and non-academic sectors through international, interdisciplinary, and intersectoral mobility combined with an innovation-oriented mind-set.

ETNs are one of the three modes of MSCA-ITNs. These networks have the objective of training highly-skilled Early Stage Researchers (ESRs; see the Glossary for a definition of ESRs) and stimulating entrepreneurship, creativity, and innovation in Europe. ETNs must be composed of at least three beneficiaries (see the Glossary) established in at least three different member states or associated countries³ of the EU. However, it is recommended to keep the size of the consortium between six and ten beneficiaries.

For more details about H2020-MSCA-ITN-ETN please see the Guide for applicants⁴.

¹ **Doctorate** is understood as the institutional frameworks and processes geared towards the completion of a doctoral degree.

² [Principles of Innovative Doctoral Training](#) (IDT) published by European Commission (2011).

³ [Associated Country \(AC\)](#) means a third country which can participate under the same conditions as legal entities from the Member States of EU.

⁴ [H2020-MSCA-ITN Guide for Applicants](#) (version 4.1, 2019).

I. General information and application procedure

Which institutions award doctoral degrees?

The doctoral degree is awarded by the institution/s where the ESR is enrolled in a PhD programme. Within the respective ETN, this institution/s can be a beneficiary, a partner organisation (see the Glossary) or an entity with a capital or legal link (see the Glossary).

What forms of doctorate attendance are available?

Normally, the employment is done on a full-time basis. However, in special cases, part-time employment for personal or family reasons can be accepted (the minimum MSCA working time must always be at least 50 %).

What is the formal length of time foreseen for completing a doctorate?

The formal length of the time foreseen for completing the doctorate in ETNs is 36 months (three years).

What is the status of the doctoral candidates?

In ETNs, the rule is that the status of the doctoral candidate is that of an employee.

What are the social benefits for doctoral candidates with student status?

Not applicable, because ETN doctoral candidates are hired with an employment contract or other direct contract with equivalent benefits, including social security coverage. Fixed amount fellowship agreements are only permitted where national law prohibits the possibility of an employment contract/equivalent direct contract. 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 and parental benefits, invalidity and accidents at work and occupational diseases.

How are doctoral candidates financially supported?

The doctoral candidates employed in ETNs receive salaries from the beneficiary that hired them. This salary always includes a living allowance (3.270 euro/month, which is 39.240 euro/year, for MSCAs calls launched in 2018-2020). Depending on the situation of the doctoral candidates, a mobility allowance (fixed rate of 600 euro/month) and family allowance (fixed rate of 500 euro/month) can be included in the salary. In addition, the research, training, and networking costs of the doctoral candidates are funded through the ETN (1.800 euro per person-month given to the beneficiary that hired the respective doctoral candidate to be spend only with ETN related costs). A correction coefficient⁵ is applied to the living allowance, depending on the country of the beneficiary hiring the doctoral candidate. These stipulated amounts are gross amounts. Consequently, the net salary results from deducting all compulsory social security contributions as well as direct taxes (e.g. income tax) from the gross amount, following the legislation in the country where the ESR is employed.

⁵ For all these country correction coefficients see Table 2 [here](#) (pages 82-83).

What are the admission requirements for a doctorate?

The requirements specific to the ETN are that the applicant:

- has to be an Early Stage Researcher (at the date of recruitment by the beneficiary, the applicant must be in the first four years (full-time equivalent research experience) of his/her research career and have not been awarded a doctoral degree);
- must not have resided or carried out his/her main activity (work, studies etc.) in the country of the recruiting beneficiary for more than 12 months in the three years immediately before the recruitment date.

In addition to these requirements specific to ETNs, each beneficiary and institution enrolling the doctoral candidate in a doctoral programme can have their own admission requirements.

II. Progression

How is a doctorate organised in an ETN?

Each ETN organises its own doctoral programme, in which each doctoral candidate hired by the ETN takes part through an individual, personalised research project. As such, the doctoral candidates hired in an ETN have to follow the doctoral programme set up by the ETN and also fulfil the requirements of doctoral programmes at the institution where they are enrolled in a PhD programme. As ETNs aim to improve the employability of the ESRs through intersectoral exposure, normally secondments at academic/non-academic entities are part of the ETN doctoral programme. The total duration of all secondments is limited to a maximum of 30 % of the employment time.

How is doctoral supervision provided?

Doctoral supervision within ETNs is provided in accordance with the specific rules described by the ETNs and the rules of the institution where the doctoral candidate is enrolled in a PhD programme. Thus, any model of supervision is practically possible.

What are the main obligations of doctoral candidates?

The main obligations of doctoral candidates are described by each specific ETN and may include attending network meetings, training sessions, science communication activities, public engagement activities etc. In addition, as part of the implementation, each recruited researcher has to establish, together with her/his personal supervisor/s at the host organisation/s, a personal Career Development Plan. Besides research objectives, this plan should include the researcher's training and career needs, as well as planning for publications and participation in conferences. Each ETN designs its own Career Development Plan structure.

Is any mobility compulsory?

Interdisciplinary, intersectoral, and international mobility are compulsory requirements of ETNs.

How are courses in transferable skills provided?

Each ETN project provides courses in transferable skills as it seems fit to its own research and doctoral training specificities. However, the ITN guide for applicants includes the following topics of interest for transferable skills courses:

- *Training related to research and innovation:* entrepreneurship, commercialisation of results, management of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), take up and exploitation of research results, communication, standardisation, ethics, scientific writing, personal development, team skills, multicultural awareness, gender issues, research integrity etc.
- *Training related to management or grant searching:* involvement in the organisation of network activities, entrepreneurship, management, proposal writing, enterprise start-up, task coordination etc.

How is the progress of the doctoral candidate evaluated?

Each ETN defines itself how to evaluate the progress of the doctoral candidates employed by the network.

Is it possible for doctoral candidates to change supervisor(s)?

The ETN doctoral candidates can change the supervisor(s) according to the rules of the specific ETN and the rules of the institution where the doctoral candidates are enrolled in a PhD programme.

Are supervisors required to have training in order to supervise doctoral candidates?

It is not a specific ETN requirement that supervisors need to have training in order to supervise doctoral candidates. However, in order for ETN grant applications to receive funding, the EU evaluators have to consider that: 1. the supervisors are qualified and experienced enough; 2. the doctoral training is proposed by the ETN is good enough.

III. Defence procedure

What requirements should be met to receive acceptance to enter the defence procedure?

The requirements to be met in order to receive acceptance to enter the defence procedure are those of the institution where the doctoral candidate is enrolled in a PhD programme.

What documents are required to start the defence procedure?

The documents required to start the defence procedure are those required by the the institution where the doctoral candidate is enrolled in a PhD programme.

What is the defence procedure?

The defense procedure follows the rules of the institution where the doctoral candidate is enrolled in a PhD programme.

Glossary:

Beneficiary - legal entity that contributes directly to the implementation of the research training programme of the ETN by recruiting, supervising, hosting, and training ESRs.

It may also provide secondment opportunities. Beneficiaries are signatories to the Grant Agreement⁶, receive funding, claim costs, and take complete responsibility for the proper implementation of the proposed research training programme. In ETNs, every beneficiary must recruit, host at its premises, and supervise at least one ESR. Only beneficiaries can recruit researchers.

Early Stage Researcher (ESR) - person hired in an ETN by a beneficiary, usually also enrolled in a PhD programme (i.e. doctoral programme; these terms are used interchangeably in this document) during the ETN project.

Entities with a legal or capital link - organisations with an established relationship with the beneficiary which is not limited to the action nor specifically created for its implementation. These entities implement certain action tasks described in Annex 1 of the Grant Agreement⁷, i.e. hosting and training of researchers. Such entities may not employ the researcher under the action and must fulfil the same conditions for participation and funding under Horizon 2020 as the beneficiary they are linked to. The involvement of such entities must be clearly described in the proposal and will be assessed as part of the evaluation.

Partner organisation - entity contributing to the implementation of the action, but that does not sign the Grant Agreement. Partner organisations do not employ the researchers under the action.

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⁶ The **Grant Agreement** is an EU standard **contract** defining the basic conditions for the project financing.

⁷ H2020 Programme AGA – [Annotated Model Grant Agreement](#) (version 5.0, 2018)

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