CZ MSCA and ERC FAQs Horizon Europe

November 2026

This document is a collection of FAQs on HE/H2020 financial issues related to MSCA and ERC projects submitted to the Research Enquiry Service of the EC and REA by the CZ NCPs on behalf of Czech beneficiaries between 2021 and November 2026. The document is intended to clarify problem areas but is not legally binding. In some areas, the interpretation of the rules might have changed over time. This document relates to Marie Skłodowska-Curie (MSCA) and European Research Council (ERC) projects. For FAQs related to multi-beneficiary projects reimbursed based on actual costs, please refer to the respective compilations created by the Technology Centre Prague.

FAQs appended after November 2026 are distinguished with exclamation mark ⚠

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MSCA

Additional work commitments (higher than 1,0 FTE)

I am seeking clarification regarding the policies on additional work commitments within various MSCA schemes. As per our previous correspondences, **my understanding is that within MSCA RISE/SE and MSCA IF/PF, minor additional work commitments (defined as activities beyond Annex I) are permissible**, provided the researcher is working/is seconded full-time on the MSCA project, and this aligns with national legislation (as outlined in the FAQ, pages 8 and 14, and our email from July 2022, enclosed for reference). However, upon reviewing the latest MSCA financial guide, precisely page 11, I am hesitant about assuming the same principles apply uniformly to MSCA ITN/DN

Could you kindly confirm whether the above logic is universally applicable across all MSCA schemes or if a distinct approach exists for individual schemes?

E-mail communication REA MSCA PF Team, 9 February, 2024

In June 2021, in the Case T-137/16 RENV University of Wroclaw versus REA, EU General Court ruled that an MSCA IEF funded researcher could not engage in additional professional activities during the project. REA thus concluded that all additional professional activities during an MSCA action must be requested through a part-time arrangement; otherwise, additional activities are not allowed.

While it may previously have been possible for researchers to conduct additional activities on top of the 1.0 FTE (e.g., performed during evenings or weekends), this practice changed in June 2021 following the abovementioned judgment.

Therefore as mentioned in our new MSCA Financial Guide, “the recruited researcher must work exclusively on the research training activities under the action, unless part-time for professional reasons is allowed and has been approved by the granting authority. Any supplementary professional activities require a shift to part-time implementation or an interruption of the fellowship if this may jeopardise the research training activities. […] However, transferable skills training, such as teaching, peer-review of a journal article or a presentation, is allowed if it does not jeopardize the implementation of the action and no amendment is required”.

Considering the above, we do not allow researchers to work more than 1.0 FTE.

Follow-up e-mail on MSCA SE: I anticipated the approach adopted would be consistent across the MSCA DN, MSC PF, and MSCA COFUND schemes. Nonetheless, there remains a degree of uncertainty regarding its applicability to the MSCA SE. I understand that it should not be extended to this scheme. Correct?

E-mail communication REA MSCA PF Team, 14 March, 2024

For SE, we have the same approach as the other MSCA actions.

The full-time dedication means that **no additional work commitments** can be performed during the secondment.

In SE, we refer to full-time secondments and full-time dedications to the project R&I activities during the secondment.

This would allow for synergies with other projects provided the R&I activities are identical.

Sick leave

I have a question concerning the sick leave in H2020 MSCA-IF. I have been contacted by the MSCA fellow who was on sick leave for one week in July.

The monthly salary of the fellow, which consists of living allowance, mobility allowance, and family allowance, is usually around 97 000 CZK. However, in July, the salary was reduced due to the sick leave (in accordance with the national law).

Since the AGA does not allow underpayments towards the researcher (the living, mobility, and family allowances must be paid fully to the researcher) and this aspect is strictly controlled by auditors, my question is following:

Does the difference between the „usual salary" and the „salary paid during the sick leave" need to be paid to the researcher (at the end of the reporting period/at the end of the project) regardless of the fact the researcher was not working, and his salary during the sick leave was paid in accordance with the national law?

E-mail communication REA MSCA PF Team, 14 August, 2022

Indeed, the MSCA fellow should receive the full salary (living, mobility and family). At the payment of the balance (during the final assessment), will be verify, among other things, that the fellow was paid the full salary according to the terms of the grant agreement.

Family and special leave allowances

Family allowance in HE: Under Horizon Europe, if the recruited researcher acquires family obligations during the implementation of the project, the family allowance can be requested.

Q1: Please, explain how it works in practice. When the situation arises, the host institution informs the project officer, and consequently, the GA needs to be officially amended since the maximum EU contribution increases?

Special needs allowance in HE:
Q1: Please, explain how to request it. When the situation arises, the host institution informs the project officer, and consequently, the GA needs to be officially amended since the maximum EU contribution increases?
Q2: Is it possible to include it in the budget before the project starts. E.g., if the host institution knows from the beginning that the special needs allowance will be needed, can they request it during the grant preparation phase?
Q3: Is there going to be some special template for the request?

E-mail communication REA MSCA PF Team, 8 June, 2022

*Regarding **Family allowance**, your assumptions are correct. The host institution informs the Project Officer and introduce an amendment to the grant as to update researcher's family status and change the EU contribution accordingly.*

*Regarding the **Special needs allowance in HE**, we are still awaiting the release of the guidance with more instructions (currently in draft). In any case, according to the 2021-2022 Work Program, requests for SN can be submitted at any moment during the implementation of the MSCA grant, when the need arises. The request should contain a description of the special needs, the type of support and the budget requested. Once agreed, the MSCA grant agreement will be formally amended and the requested amount for the special needs will be covered by the increase of the budget in the Management cost category. This extra amount will be paid together with the payment of the balance.*

To make a request for SN, we therefore suggest the host beneficiary to contact the Project Officer of the project in question, and they will provide them with a template for their Special Needs request, which will then be evaluated and processed by the REA.

Family allowance – change of the family status during the project (follow-up)

In the answer above, you confirmed that the maximum EU contribution might be increased if the researcher acquires family status during the project implementation. **Does it/does it not also work the other way around?** For example, is the family allowance reduced if the researchers lose their family status during the project implementation?

E-mail communication REA MSCA PF Team, 16 December, 2022

The family allowances are indeed due as long as the researcher has family obligations during the action duration. If during the implementation of the action the recruited researcher ceases to have family obligations, there is no more entitlement to the family allowance.

⚠ Exchange Rate Rules

I have a question concerning the **exchange rate calculation (and reporting) in MSCA.** In particular, being the MSCA a unit-cost based grant, the Beneficiary receives the grant and then distributes it to the fellow in the form of salary (+ other allowances when applicable). **Is there any rule on how the Beneficiary should apply the exchange rate of the grant for the distribution of the allowances to the fellow?**

For example, in Switzerland some organisations may tackle the unfavorable exchange rate by taking a rather conservative approach. Some instances are:

• applying the exchange rate every month – with consequent fluctuation of salary that is not linear throughout the project

• deduction of a certain percentage from the exchange rate to absorb possible fluctuations in the next months – for example if the exchange rate is 1EUR=0,92CHF, then there is a deduction of 10%, with a final exchange rate at 0,82 – the consequence is a reduction of 10% of the salary for that specific month.

Would these situations be in line with the Grant Agreement, or is there any specific rule and/or check on how the exchange rate shall be applied? Are there audits (or CFS) required by MSCA grants and would they spot this as a flagged item?

E-mail communication REA MSCA SE Team, 4 November, 2026

In EU projects (such as Horizon Europe and MSCA), financial statements must be submitted in Euro. If your organization's primary currency and accounting records are in a non-Euro currency, you must convert the costs of paying staff using the average of the daily exchange rates calculated over the corresponding reporting period.

The Mandatory Conversion Rules under Article 21.3 of the EU Model Grant Agreement (MGA):

- **Primary Rule**: **Convert using the mathematical average of daily ECB exchange rates published in the Official Journal of the European Union over the reporting period.**
- **Fallback Rule**: If unavailable, use the average of monthly accounting rates from the Commission's InforEuro portal for the same period.

On the payment of the staff/fellow:

If the sending organisation maintains its accounting in a currency other than the Euro and needs to pay the secondee (or transfer the accommodation/travel allowance to them), the conversion will take place at the time of actual payment according to the institution's internal bank rates or via the InforEuro portal of the relevant month.

You should be able to demonstrate the unit cost category A (staff allowance costs) was fully used for the benefit of the secondee. If needed and applicable, you can also top up the unit cost category A using the unit cost category B (institutional costs).

You can use Daily rates or monthly accounting rates if no daily rate exists.

Mandatory return phase MSCA PF GF

Experience shared by UK MSCA NCP (based in UKRO), 5. April 2024

We have a case of a researcher on a Global Fellowship who did not agree with the fact that the return phase is mandatory and that there could be a financial penalty if they did not return. In the UK it is common for the employer to pass the financial liability on to the fellow through their contract, in case they don't come back and the EC ends up penalising the host.

In the end we had to reach out to REA who provided additional clarification, and I thought I would share it in case anyone else comes across anything similar.

In case the return phase will not be implemented, the Project Officer (PO) assigned to that project will have to assess the justification(s) and the **due diligence** performed by the beneficiary in the implementation of its obligation to ensure the mandatory return phase. The term "due diligence" is defined as the level of care that can reasonably be expected from the beneficiary, in order to ensure the fulfilment of its obligations under the grant agreement (as defined in the AGA p.344).

To assess the compliance with the contractual obligations related to the return phase, the PO will ask for **a copy of the researcher's employment contract** and **any other relevant documentation showing that the beneficiary supported the fellow's return** at its premises (such as email exchanges between the beneficiary and the fellow). The PO will then check in the employment contract the existence of the clause mentioning the obligation of the researcher to carry out a mandatory return period at its premises.

If REA considers that there is a serious breach of obligations regarding the return phase, (i.e. significant impact on the action), it may reduce the grant. However, if the assessment comes out as the beneficiary acted in due diligence, the beneficiary will not be penalised.

Mobility and Family Allowances in the outgoing phase of MSCA PF GF

I have a question concerning the mobility and family allowance payments in MSCA-PF-GF outgoing phase. I understand that mobility and family allowances may be paid to the researchers in various ways. Any form is acceptable, provided that: a) both sides agree; it is allowed under national law AND; there is no underpayment. At the same time, REA encourages host institutions to optimize mandatory deductions and taxation, if possible. In the Czech Republic, beneficiaries usually pay mobility and family allowances in the researcher's salary (with the living allowance). This way is simple and clean and causes no administrative burden. **With the rising inflation, however, host institutions and researchers have started searching for other ways to optimize mandatory deductions more effectively.**

The list of items that can be exempt from taxation in the Czech Republic is very limited. One of the exemptions is travel and subsistence costs related to a business trip. During the **MSCA-PF-GF outgoing phase**, the Host Institution may decide on the following options: 1. the researcher can formally change the place of work (with limited entitlement to travel and subsistence costs). Czech

host institutions commonly use this option during the MSCA-PF-GF outgoing phase; 2. the researcher can be seconded for a business trip (with full entitlement to travel and subsistence costs).

My question is: **Would it be acceptable for REA if the host institution decides to go for option 2) and pay mobility and family allowances as subsistence costs** (instead of making it an additional part of the salary)? The researchers would strongly prefer this option since it reduces their taxation and is in line with the national legislation. However, it could be formally objected that a "business trip" should not be covered from the mobility allowance.

In this scenario (option 2): If the researcher needs to go for a “project” business trip (e.g., attending a conference) during the outgoing phase, the "main" business trip ends. Travel and subsistence costs associated with attending the conference are covered from institutional contributions. After the "project" business trip ends, the "main" business trip would start again. This would guarantee that the ad hoc “project” business trips would be covered from institutional contributions. Is this in line with HE rules?

Although this option might not be administratively smooth, we believe it complies with national legislation, and researchers may prefer it. That is why your opinion is crucial to us.

E-mail communication REA MSCA PF GF Team, 14 August, 2022

In fact the main principle for us it’s that:

1) The researcher gets an employment contract with the salary as per the grant;

2) That the allowances the researcher has the right to, are paid also.

Having said this, we assume that what is important is that the researcher does get these amounts and they are accounted for. In which way these amounts are going to be paid to the researcher, really depends on the national legislation, the beneficiary’s internal rules and the agreement reached between the two parts. We would suggest that the allowances (wherever the format they take but have to be for the amount as per the GA) are paid at the same time (calendar days) as the salary. This will be much easier in terms of accountancy and keeping track of payments and in case of any possible audit.

Project reporting in MSCA PF GF

Q1: Is it in principle possible to extend the grant duration? In the specific case I am dealing with, the researcher would use the extension to complete the activities planned in Annex 1. The host institution would be willing to finance the extension (living, mobility, and family allowances of the researcher) from unused institutional costs.
I understand that the reporting in MSCA is simplified – there are only two types of deliverables that may be reported (ethics requirements and DMP). Other deliverables (even if identified in Annex I) should not be submitted. However, in continuous reporting, the researcher must report publications, dissemination, and communication activities. Therefore, my questions are the following:
Q2: What happens if the **planned number of conferences and publications is lower** than what was planned in Annex I?
Q3: **Does REA check** whether the planned number of publication and communication activities was delivered and **at what point**? Can discrepancies between the plan and reality lead to consequences for the beneficiary?

Q4: Can these discrepancies be **accepted if justified** (e.g., due to the Covid, it was not possible to attend the planned number of conferences, etc.).
Q5: Publications
Can the publication be reported/accepted if the MSCA fellow is **not the main/first author**?
Can the publication be reported/accepted if the actual publication will take place **after the project ends**?
Q6: Conference attendance
Can the conference attendance be reported/accepted if **another person attended the conference and presented** the publication than the fellow himself.

E-mail communication REA MSCA PF GF Team, 18 July, 2022

1) Formally the project only has a duration of 24 (or 36 as for instance for GFs and some CARs). As you well know it is based on units and the researcher has to have an employment contract for the duration of the full project. This means that extensions cannot be granted (as budget is fixed for those months). Now, there are two options:

a. one is to suspend the project for x time while the researcher is carrying on the work and is paid by the beneficiary (these are arrangements between the beneficiary and the researcher). The suspension will mean that formally the researcher is not working for the project during that time, so the end of the project will be postponed accordingly and with it the reporting periods too;

b. the researcher continues working on the project while being paid by the beneficiary after the project ends formally. This means that they will have to submit the report 60 days after the formal end date (the one appearing in the system). In principle POs can be a bit flexible in extending the deadline based on a good justification from the researcher.

2) Your assumption is correct concerning the deliverables (there is now a new one on Dissemination and Exploitation to be submitted one month before the formal end date of the project).

So, if the publications and/or conferences are lower and/or higher, this will have to be explained in the technical report, especially if there is a big difference (ie. three publications envisaged and only one submitted or six conferences planned and only two attended). The overall aim of the outreach and dissemination should be obtained and this can be with less and or more events/publications. If the growth is substantial, this should also be emphasized in the technical report;

3) This question is partially answered previously ? The discrepancy must be very well justified. If the project delivers almost nothing compared to what was envisaged, it can have consequences for the project as it will be considered a breach of contractual obligations (annex 1 is part f the contract and was written by the applicant that was funded based on that). REA/the PO check this when assessing the report after it being submitted;

4) Was answered already. COVID did affect the Dissemination and Outreach efforts, but still a lot could be done on-line;

5) Yes, of course, as co-author; as per the contract the researcher should mention any publication that is on the making and/or submitted for review in the technical report and has the obligation to update the continuous report after the project ends, following the open access rules;

6) This has to be explained and justified. Why and whom? And what was the art the researcher played in those results presented.

Underpayment of the Researcher, MSCA DN

Dear REA, I have a question concerning the underpayment of the researcher in MSCA-ITN caused by the exchange rate fluctuation. The project is still ongoing. However, the researcher no longer works for the beneficiary, and the beneficiary did not manage to pay the corrective payment (fixing the underpayment) during the researcher´s employment.

Can you confirm that the corrective payment may be paid in any form (compliant with the national legislation and the usual practice of the beneficiary)? For example, in this case, the beneficiary would like to pay the **corrective payment as a stipend**. In other words, it is **not necessary to re-employ the researcher** (e.g. for 1 month) to pay the corrective payment. Correct?

E-mail communication REA MSCA PF GF Team, 4 November, 2022
Yes, we confirm that this is possible. We also do this in case the underpayment is detected after the project is closed. We always ask the beneficiary to make an additional payment to the researcher. Since the project is still ongoing, the Financial Statement at the final payment will be with the correct amount.

⚠ **Excellence Hubs – 70% Funding Rate and Co-Financing Arrangements**

Dear RES, I have a follow-up question concerning RES reply No. #8475336.
From the reply, I understand that the **70% funding rate under the Excellence Hubs call is applied in the same way as in Horizon Europe Innovation Actions, except that it applies to all beneficiaries, regardless of their non-profit status**. In practice, each beneficiary declares 100% of its eligible costs, of which the EU reimburses 70%.
However, the following statement in your previous reply is not entirely clear to us:
“The proposal should include an explanation on how the remaining 30% will be secured and shared among the beneficiaries.”
In standard Innovation Actions, beneficiaries are not normally expected to explain in the proposal how they will finance the remaining 30% of their eligible costs. They simply indicate in the budget table whether this share will be covered by “Own Resources” or “Financial Contributions”.
Q1: Does the same apply in Excellence Hubs call or are there some specifics?
The reference to the remaining 30% being “shared among the beneficiaries” is also somewhat unusual, since the 70% funding rate is fixed for all beneficiaries in the budget table.
Q2: Could you therefore please clarify whether, under this call, **each beneficiary is expected to cover 30% of its own eligible costs, or whether the effective level of co-financing may be distributed** unevenly among the beneficiaries within the consortium?
Q3: If an uneven distribution is expected, **where should this arrangement be described in the proposal**, and **should it subsequently be reflected in the consortium agreement**, given that Annex 2 will presumably calculate the EU contribution by applying the 70% funding rate uniformly to each beneficiary?
Q4: The reply to question 5 is also unclear. **Is this interpretation based on a specific condition of the call?** Under the standard Horizon Europe rules, income generated by the action may generally be used to cover the share of eligible costs not reimbursed by the EU contribution, subject to the no-profit rule.

Case no 8692856, 29. October 2026

The Excellence Hubs Call (HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-04-WIDENING-01) requires that the beneficiaries describe in the proposal how they will secure and share among them the remaining 30% of the total eligible costs; the Excellence Hubs' type of Action is a Coordination and Support Action not an Innovation Action. The requested EU contribution for an individual beneficiary may be up to that beneficiary's total eligible costs, which implies a requested funding rate of 100% for that beneficiary. In such cases, applicants may see a warning message indicating that the ' Requested contribution for beneficiary XXX cannot be higher than the maximum EU contribution' for that beneficiary; however, this does not prevent submission of the proposal. **Hence each beneficiary can request different funding rate, not exceeding 100%** of the total eligible cost for that beneficiary.

By contrast, **the total requested EU contribution for the proposal, as a whole, must not exceed the maximum total EU contribution, which is 70% of the total eligible costs**. If this threshold is exceeded, a warning message stating that the 'Requested EU contribution cannot be higher than the Max EU contribution' will appear below the budget table. This warning is also non-blocking, but it should be taken into account, as it reflects that the requirements set out in the call are not respected. The description of how the remaining 30% will be secured and shared among beneficiaries should be included under Section 3 'Quality and efficiency of the Implementation'.

Regarding income generated by the action, this may contribute to the complementary financing of the action. However, for-profit beneficiaries, except from SMEs/ start-ups which receive financial support to third parties, must declare the relevant revenues generated by the action, which are taken into account for the purpose of applying the no-profit rule. **If the action generates a profit, the applicable proportion of that profit will be deducted from the final EU grant** in accordance with the Grant Agreement and therefore will not be calculated towards the remaining 30% of the action's eligible costs.

Paid holidays during the secondment, MSCA SE

According to the national legislation/collective agreements, researchers are entitled to 5 weeks of paid holidays, two sick days, etc. With shorter secondments, researchers are usually instructed not to use paid holidays during their secondments. However, if the secondment is longer (e.g., 12 months), researchers are entitled to use their paid holidays during their secondments. In these cases, the sending institution interrupts the secondment and starts again after the paid holidays. How to deal with these situations in the Portal? For example, should the full 12 months be declared as the days of secondment, or do the paid holidays/sick days, etc., need to be reflected somehow?

E-mail communication REA MSCA SE Team, 20 December, 2022

Following the same approach as in MSCA RISE, a secondment (same staff member, same sending organisation, same host organisation) may be split into several stays over the duration of the project. Then, sending institution may interrupt the secondment and start again after the paid holidays. Every period before and after the paid holiday will be considered a split. However, the total of all cumulated split stays shall not be less than 1 month or more than 12 months over the full project duration. Then, you should be able to encode the secondment with different splits under the Researcher Declaration in the reporting system.

Follow-up question:

In case the fellow is seconded for 12 months and under the national law has five weeks of paid holidays during that time (used at once or split as they choose): Does using this paid holiday (1 day or one week, or five weeks at once) mean the secondment is split and must be reported as split at Researcher Declaration in the reporting system?

E-mail communication REA MSCA SE Team, 5 January, 2022

Bank/public holiday are accepted (no split secondment) but annual paid leaves should be split.

Changes in the secondment plan MSCA RISE/SE

I am writing to seek clarification regarding the MSCA RISE project. Within a consortium led by a Czech coordinator, two European partners have each planned to carry out one secondment. However, due to personnel capacity constraints, these partners may be unable to fulfill their secondment obligations and will consequently report 0 person-months (PM) to the action.

I believe transferring their allocated person months to another partner within the consortium should be feasible in principle. This would require consultation with the Project Officer and an amendment to the grant agreement. However, I have concerns regarding the potential repercussions of the two partners not fulfilling any secondment activities. I would greatly appreciate it if any of you could share your experiences or insights on this matter.

E-mail communication REA MSCA SE Team, 15 June 2023

Indeed, as you have correctly pointed it is important to contact the PO in order to assess the issue and the reasons.

In the case the Beneficiaries are not participating (sending and/or hosting) in the project anymore, they will be removed/replaced with an amendment.

Salary during the secondment MSCA RISE/SE

I have a question concerning MSCA RISE /MSCA SE and the MGA statement „*beneficiaries must ensure that the rights and obligations of the seconded staff remain unchanged during the secondment"* complemented in AGA by the statement "***beneficiaries must continue to pay them as before, according to their internal practices***".

The staff members must be seconded in MSCA RISE /MSCA SE full-time. Therefore, staff members who have worked on other projects (e.g. national ones) prior to the MSCA project will cease working on these projects during the period of MSCA secondment. As the usual practice of the organization is that the staff member's salary consists of a tariff and a project bonus (paid for implemented projects), the consequence will be that the researcher's salary will be slightly reduced during the period of the MSCA secondment (as he/she will not be working on a national project for the duration of the secondment, he/she will not be paid the bonus for implementation of the national project).

This reflects the usual internal practice of the beneficiary and reflects the internal remuneration policy; therefore we assume it is in line with MSCA RISE /MSCA SE and will be accepted. Thank you for your confirmation.

E-mail communication REA MSCA SE Team, 27 February, 2023

It is in line with national practice and the contract of the staff, therefore it is acceptable.

Split secondment secondment MSCA RISE/SE

I have a question concerning the split secondment in the MSCA RISE project. A researcher will execute a secondment at Partner Organisation from 1 September to 1 January. As documentary evidence for these dates, our client will keep the flight ticket and the boarding passes as usual. However, the researcher wants to interrupt the secondment from 1 October to 1 November for personnel reasons. He will stay in the same city as the Partner Organisation, so there won't be any transport receipt. As a solution, the partner is considering having a letter in which the researcher states that he interrupted the secondment on 1 October and restarted it on 1 November. Would this be acceptable? Or is there a better way?

E-mail communication REA MSCA SE Team, September 2023

Regarding your enquiry, the beneficiary needs to keep appropriate and sufficient evidence to prove that the person-months declared are correct. The nature of the records and supporting documents to be kept by the beneficiary must be adequate to show the duration of the secondments clearly and unequivocally. Furthermore, the evidence must be verifiable, auditable and available.

We recommend that the fellow involved coordinate with their supervisor at the hosting institution to obtain a signed letter from them. This letter should then be shared with the Project Officer responsible for overseeing this grant for further review by our Legal team.

⚠ **Parallel employment during secondment and funding synergies MSCA RISE/SE**

I am seeking clarification regarding the **synergies between different funding sources (institutional, national, and EU) as permitted under the MSCA RISE/SE guidelines**. See guide for applicants, p.4:

> **A Staff Exchanges project** is a high quality and credible R&I project with an original idea demonstrating a clear added-value to the *state-of-the-art* in its scientific field. The project should be realised through well-planned and targeted knowledge sharing activities and proposed interactions between the participating organisations. Projects can be implemented together with other related R&I activities funded by another EU grant (e.g. Horizon Europe grants other than the MSCA, Erasmus+, Structural Funds etc.) as long as this does not entail double funding[1].

AND the conclusions of the national event confirmed by the REA representative.

In the Czech Republic, it is common for PhD students to hold an employment contract with a beneficiary institution (e.g., 0.5 FTE) alongside their PhD stipends. Within this employment contract, they can perform national grants, EU grants, or activities other than grants.

We understand that any student registered as a PhD candidate for at least one month is automatically eligible for secondment. During the secondment, Czech beneficiaries usually conclude a secondment agreement with the PhD student (other than an employment contract), which stipulates the rights and obligations of the student during the secondment, including the obligation to work full-time on the MSCA project.

Could you please confirm if our understanding is correct: if the **parallel employment contract is synergic with the MSCA SE project**, the PhD student is not required to terminate it during the secondment? Conversely, if the activities under the employment contract are not synergic with the MSCA RISE/SE project and/or if they result **in double funding**, then the employment contract must be terminated for the duration of the secondment. Is that correct?

E-mail communication REA MSCA SE Team, 10 July 2024

Upon further consideration and review of the guidelines, it is our understanding that if the activities under the employment contract are synergic with the MSCA RISE/SE project, the fellow could retain their current working arrangements, contract, and PhD stipend. However, if the activities under the employment contract are not synergic with the MSCA RISE/SE project, or if they result in double funding, then these working arrangements should be modified to ensure full commitment to the MSCA RISE/SE project.

⚠ Secondment of individual professionals linked to professional organisations, MSCA SE

*We are supporting a client currently preparing a proposal as a coordinator for the MSCA SE call (deadline: February 5). The client intends to **involve two professional organizations with the limited number of their own employees**, who would like to second their members (individual professionals, natural persons) under contracts that comply with national law. These contracts would ensure that professional organizations can fulfill the obligations outlined in the grant agreement.*

From our understanding, this approach aligns with the following provision in the MSCA financial guide:
"The type of relationship between the seconded staff member and the sending organization (e.g., employment contract, fellowship, or other) is not relevant as long as:

- *it complies with national law,*
- *it complies with internal practices and*
- *During the secondment, it confers legal authority on the sending beneficiary (or associated partner) to ensure compliance with the GA obligations."*

The client has assured us that the contracts will stipulate that the professionals will be actively linked to or engaged with the sending organization for at least one month at the time of the secondment. Furthermore, the contracts will ensure the reintegration of the professionals after the secondment, as their contractual relationship will extend beyond the secondment period and last until the project's end. In addition, the contracts will require the professionals to cooperate on project outputs, ensuring their active involvement in delivering the project's results.

We would appreciate your feedback on this proposed model. Specifically:

1. ***Is this arrangement viable if clearly explained in the proposal?***
2. ***Should we be aware of any potential issues concerning MSCA Staff Exchange rules?***

E-mail communication REA MSCA SE Team, 15 January 2025

In what concerns the two professional organizations mentioned in your e-mail and their employees, indeed they seem to fulfil the eligibility conditions for participation in the SE scheme. You can find more information in the Funding & Tenders Portal in:

Download HE MSCA SE Guide for Applicants 2024 (please refer to table 3)

WP 2023-2025 13_General Annexes

Just as you have mentioned, the staff to **be seconded must fulfil the following conditions**-from your e-mail they all seem to be in place:

1. Be **considered staff of the sending organisation** (compliance with national law and institutional internal practices is in place);

2. The **seconded staff will be under the direction and instructions of the sending organisation for the duration of the secondment** (please ensure that their contract also makes that clear-ensuring supervision);

3. The **seconded staff is actively engaged in/ linked to R&I activities at the respective professional organisation** and has been so for at least one month before the secondment;

4. The **seconded staff are competent and able to implement the project and will not be seconded for purely administrative or dissemination tasks**;

5. They will as you have already mentioned, **return to the sending institution for the transfer of knowledge to take place**.

In summary, the **description you have provided when introducing the organizations is indeed viable and should be clearly and succinctly explained in the proposal**.

When drafting the proposal the applicants should focus on describing the participation of the professional organizations and the role they will play in the research project etc. following the proposal template different bullet points.

⚠ Retaining 1.2 FTE during secondment, MSCA SE

We have a client currently implementing MSCA SE who plans to second an employee with a total FTE of 1.2, consisting of 0.7 FTE financed from institutional sources and 0.5 FTE financed from national project funding. This arrangement complies with our national legislation. **The institutional activities and the national project are fully synergic with the MSCA SE. The employee will work exclusively on the MSCA SE action during the secondment, with no additional work commitments.**

Given this context, is it correct to understand that the employee may retain their total FTE of 1.2 during the secondment?

E-mail communication REA MSCA SE Team, August 2024

The FTE (or the working time) is an element resulting from the national legislation.

On the one hand, the obligation included in the GA is twofold:

a) exclusive dedication (i.e., only activities indicated in the technical annex) and

b) full-time dedication regardless of the working time (i.e., no part-time).

If both conditions are fulfilled the secondment is in principle eligible.

On the other hand, the obligation is referring to the "research activities" of the project: this means that, as long as the staff member is dedicated full-time to these activities (those latu sensu included in the description of the project), then it is allowed.

It is responsibility of the beneficiary to ensure that the research activities performed are consistent with the description of the SE project even if (partially) funded elsewhere provided that this will not result in double funding.

⚠ **Redistribution of institutional unit contributions, MSCA SE**

I have a question regarding associated partners from high-income countries, which may not receive EU funds from the consortium to cover secondments in MSCA SE. Could you please confirm whether my understanding is correct that in accordance with guidance on page 36 of the MSCA Financial Guide, beneficiaries may still decide to **redistribute the institutional unit contributions (RTN / Management and Indirect) to associated partners from high-income countries**, based on the consortium/partnership agreement, to cover the costs for hosting secondments at their premises?

E-mail communication REA MSCA SE Team, 31 October 2025

Yes, it is possible, from an associated partners from high-income countries, to cover the mobility cost (e.g., visiting professor), using cost category B.

Conclusions on selected MSCA RISE/SE implmentaion issues, Olomouc, 29. March 2023

REC RECORDING of the general infoday part

Implementation Q&As

→Eligibility of the seconded staff (see recording 01:02:30)

According to the MGA, seconded staff may be (among others) "*administrative, managerial, or technical staff supporting research and innovation activities under the action.*"

CONCLUSION 1: The management activities as such are not supported/eligible under MSCA RISE/SE. Non-scientific personnel may participate, provided they implement activities related to the project (e.g., dissemination activities, technology transfer, knowledge valorization, etc.). Qualification of the seconded staff should be described in the project proposal and will be checked in case of an audit. Secondees must have the appropriate qualification to implement the project.

📖 *See Guide for Applicants, p. 7: "Staff members shall have appropriate competence to implement the project and R&I work packages and deliverables. Moreover, those with purely administrative roles (e.g., accountants) are not considered to be actively involved in the R&I activities of the organisation. Therefore, they are not eligible for secondments."*

→Salary of the seconded staff (see recording 01:09:07)

CONCLUSION 2: The grant does not cover the salary of the seconded staff. However, the nature of the MSCA RISE/SE project foresees synergies with other grants (national and EU) as long as this does not entail double funding, the rules of these grants allow that, and the spirit (content) of the grants is the same or similar. In these cases, hours and personnel costs can be declared to these other grants and the top-up allowance of the seconded staff to the MSCA RISE/SE.

📖 *See Guide for Applicants, p. 4. "Projects can be implemented together with other related R&I activities funded by another EU grant (e.g., Horizon Europe grants other than the MSCA, Erasmus+, Structural Funds, etc.) as long as this does not entail double funding."*

→Normal remuneration of the seconded staff (see recording 01:11:38)

📖 *According to H2020 AGA, p. 529: "Beneficiaries and partner organisations must not penalize the staff members or reduce their rights due to the participation in the action and in particular, since their normal remuneration is not covered by the grant (which is only a top-up allowance to cover the travel, accommodation, and subsistence costs of the secondment), continue to pay them as before, according to their internal practices."*

CONCLUSION 3: If it is a usual practice of the beneficiary that the remuneration of the seconded staff fluctuates depending on the involvement in specific projects, REA respects that. Amendments to the salary statement (Annex to the employment contract) for the period of secondment are acceptable.

- REA checks the existence of the contract. A contract must be in place at least one month before the secondment.
- REA does not check the remuneration levels of seconded staff before, during, or after the project. However, REA expects that the beneficiary provides seconded staff sufficient support in terms of salary during the secondment.

Example: A student is employed by the beneficiary and works (0,5 FTE) on a project funded from Structural Funds (PSF). From the first day of se secondment under MSCA SE, the working hours of the student are increased to 1,0 FTE to comply with the MSCA SE rules.

During the MSCA SE secondment, the salary of the secondee is financed as follows:

0,5 FTE is financed from PSF → hourly rate: 30 EUR/hour

0,5 FTE is finaced from beneficiary's institutional sources→hourly rate: 25 EUR/hour

⟶During the secondment, the average hourly rate of the student is lower than his hourly rate paid immediatelly before the secondment. This can be accepted by REA, since this is compliant with the beneficiary's usual remuneraton practice.

→Institutional contributions (see recording 01:13:16)

CONCLUSION 4: Institutional contributions (RTN contribution and Management and indirect contribution) are administered by beneficiaries.

- REA/audit does not control what individual items were covered by these contributions. The items may vary depending on the specific needs of the projects.
- REA/audit control eligibility of PM declared by the beneficiary.

→Split secondment (see recording 01:14:52)

CONCLUSION 5: Annual paid leaves (*dovolená*) may not be claimed as secondments and require a secondment split (in the Mobility Declaration). Bank/public holidays (*státní svátky*) do not require a split.

→Reintegration after the secondment (see recording 01:16:39)

CONCLUSION 6: Secondments aim to enable the transfer of knowledge (during and after the secondment). There is no minimum legal requirement for the duration of the reintegration phase.

REA generally does not accept: If the beneficiary decides to terminate the contract with the secondee immediately after the secondment. Individual cases are assessed case by case.

REA accepts: If the secondee decides to terminate the contract immediately after.

Secondments MSCA COFUND

In the project proposal, the beneficiary may voluntarily choose to involve associated partners who provide training or secondment without the right to claim contributions. If the beneficiary states in the proposal that the secondment will be mandatory for each researcher implementing the project, is the fact that the secondment was implemented checked by the EC/audit? How and when? What happens if some researchers do not implement the secondment? Are there some consequences for the beneficiary (financial, other)?

E-mail communication REA MSCA COFUND Team, 11 November, 2022
Secondments are not checked by the audit, the audit will check that the fellows are supposed to be where they are when they are recruited (complying with the mobility rule) as well as they receive the salary indicated in annex I. Having said that, the project officer will check that the secondments (among other aspects of the training programme) are in line to what has been foreseen in annex I; there is a mid term review planned to check on the implementation of the project. Of course deviations can happen but the beneficiary must propose a credible training programme, so if the beneficiary states in the proposal that secondments will be mandatory, the institution/s in charge of hosting the secondments must be rather certain at the proposal stage that will be the case.

Audits MSCA COFUND

In the project proposal, the beneficiary indicated that the total monthly amount paid directly to researchers will be a sum of a COFUND allowance of 3980 EUR, a Mobility allowance of 200 EUR, and a Family allowance of up to 500 EUR.

Underpayments

Does the audit control whether the total amount (COFUND allowance, mobility allowance, family allowance, travel allowance) **was fully paid to the researcher**, or does the auditor only control that the COFUND allowance was paid fully to the researcher?

E-mail communication REA MSCA COFUND Team, 21 September, 2022

The auditors will check the salary amount which is stipulated in annex I and not only the minimum salary required.

Research costs and Training (RTC)

In other MSCA schemes, the institutional contributions are eligible if they are calculated as unit contributions following the method set out in Annex 2a and if the living and mobility allowances are eligible. The audit does not check the composition of institutional contributions, and rules do not say what items may/may not be covered by these contributions.

Can you confirm that this also applies to MSCA-COFUND?

E-mail communication REA MSCA COFUND Team, 21 September, 2022

We pay the COFUND allowance based on person months and that is it.

Is it up to the beneficiary to decide what items may/may be covered from RTC and what rules to set for implementing partners?

E-mail communication REA MSCA COFUND Team, 21 September, 2022

Correct

Due to the specific nature of the unit cost grant, there are no EC rules for the purchases (small equipment or other) that the beneficiary must follow and auditors check. Can you confirm that?

E-mail communication REA MSCA COFUND Team, 21 September, 2022

Correct

Beneficiaries are not expected to have any unused amounts at the end of the action. **Will auditors control whether the RTC was fully used to support researchers' career development?**

E-mail communication REA MSCA COFUND Team, 21 September, 2022

No, they check if the fellows have been paid correctly and if they have received the allowances they were supposed to receive.

Budget FLEXIBILITY

There is budget flexibility regarding institutional contributions, allowing unused amounts to be spent for other action-related purposes. **Does the same also apply in MSCA COFUND? Namely for categories: Travel allowance, Research costs, and training?**

E-mail communication REA MSCA COFUND Team, 21 September, 2022

Yes, there is budget flexibility among the budget categories.

Sick leave (absences shorter than 30 days)

In Horizon 2020, the if the researcher was absent for 30 consecutive days (or less), the costs incurred during this period could be charged to the action. The MSCA fellow received the full salary (living, mobility, and family allowances) despite the fact his salary paid during the sick leave might normally be lower according to the national legislation. **Does the same principle also apply to MSCA COFUND in MSCA?**

E-mail communication REA MSCA COFUND Team, 21 September, 2022

Yes

What is the "full salary" in MSCA COFUND? COFUND contribution or COFUND contribution, mobility allowance, and family allowance, which will be paid in the researchers' salary?

E-mail communication REA MSCA COFUND Team, 21 September, 2022

Yes, the salary that the fellow would normally be paid if he/she was working and if the fellow is absent for more than 30 days under HE the beneficiary can apply for a long-term leave allowance.

⚠ Audit of co-financing and non-researcher cost categories, MSCA COFUND

From my previous communication with REA, I understand that the financial audit primarily focuses on verifying whether the amounts intended to be paid directly to researchers, namely **Remuneration (Living Allowance), Mobility Allowance and Family Allowance, were fully paid and that no underpayment occurred**.

At the same time, my understanding is that the audit does not assess either the composition or the actual amounts spent under other budget categories foreseen in the proposal, such as Travel Allowance, Research Costs, Training costs, Management Costs or Indirect Costs. In this context, I would be grateful for clarification on the following points:

Q1: Is the **Host Institution nevertheless obliged to incur these costs in full** for the project and duly record them in the project accounting cost centre?

Q2: Is **compliance with the originally proposed level of co-funding/co-financing subject to verification** and, if so, at what stage and through which mechanism?

Q3: Is it permissible for the **final level of co-financing to be lower than originally foreseen** in the proposal?

Q4: If so, should such a **deviation be formally declared or reported** to the European Commission?

Case number 8189186, date: 9 July, 2026

Please find below some comments and replies regarding your case.
From my previous communication with REA, I understand that the financial audit primarily focuses on verifying whether the amounts intended to be paid directly to researchers, namely Remuneration (Living Allowance), Mobility Allowance and Family Allowance, were fully paid and that no underpayment occurred.
The principle of unit cost audit is to verify that the units were eligible, the researchers were paid according to the grant agreement and the project was implemented correctly. Indeed, one of the elements that auditors check is that the researchers were paid correctly, according to the grant agreement, including the confounding part.

At the same time, my understanding is that the audit does not assess either the composition or the actual amounts spent under other budget categories foreseen in the proposal, such as Travel Allowance, Research Costs, Training costs, Management Costs or Indirect Costs.
Indeed, once the units are considered eligible and there is a proof that the researchers were working on the project and they implemented it according to the Annex 1, the auditor will not verify the `actual costs` related to the institutional and management costs.

Q1: Is the Host Institution nevertheless obliged to incur these costs in full for the project and duly record them in the project accounting cost centre?
The costs must be incurred based on the proportion of researcher-months spent on the project: if 100% of researcher-months are spent on the project, it is expected that the project will occur 100% of EU contribution as well as 100% of the Co-funding part (some exceptions might be possible but it is expected that this is communicated with the project officer in advance, e.g. a researcher will not implement some secondments due to the family or health reasons = the proportion of costs originally assigned to these secondment will not be spent.)

Regarding the cost recording, the institution is supposed to follow their national/institutional accounting registration rules.
Q2: Is compliance with the originally proposed level of co-funding/co-financing subject to verification and, if so, at what stage and through which mechanism?
Yes, the project officer verifies at the reporting and payment stage that the cofunding level promised in the proposal and approved in the grant agreement (Annex 1) was followed. Non compliance might lead to the grant reduction, according to the grant agreement rules.

Q3: Is it permissible for the final level of co-financing to be lower than originally foreseen in the proposal?
In principle not. However, as mentioned above – in specific duly justified situations, e.g. some secondments not implemented, but the project officer must be informed in advance.
Otherwise, if 100% of researcher-months are used, it is expected that the project will occur 100% of EU contribution and cofunding.

Q4: If so, should such a deviation be formally declared or reported to the European Commission?
Any deviation from the original planning (including co-funding) must be discussed in advance with the project officer, who will advise whether the deviation is still in line with the original funding decision and whether this constitute the change that would require an official amendment or not.

Operating Grants

Dear REA, I have a question concerning the operating grants and MSCA. I found the following FAQ on the FTOP. My questions are the following:
1) Does the fact the host institution receives an operating grant need to be notified to a project officer, and at what point?
2) Is the whole cost category (management and indirect contribution) reduced? How (ex-ante/ex-post)? How is the reduction reflected in the financial reporting?
3) If the operating grant only covers a part of the institution´s costs, is there still a possibility to charge FULL management and indirect contribution to the MSCA project?
4) Could you provide more practical details concerning the operating grants and MSCA? Any real-life example would be very appreciated.

E-mail communication REA MSCA PFTeam, 28 November, 2022
1) Yes, as soon as possible.

2) In case a beneficiary already receives an operating grant financed by the EU or the Euratom budget in the same period, only management contribution can be claimed, i.e. half (50%) of the applicable management and indirect contribution, unless the beneficiary can demonstrate cost separation, i.e. that the operating grant does not cover any costs of the action (please see conditions below*).

If the operating grant is known in the grant preparation phase, the management/indirect cost category is reduced by 50% for the relevant time period. If the operating grant is known only at the reporting stage, 50% of the full management/indirect cost category will be rejected for the relevant time period of overlap.

3) Yes, as explained above, only in the case that the beneficiary can demonstrate **cost separation*** and that the operating grant does not cover any part of the costs of the MSCA action. For details, please see below.

4) Cases are rare. In the past we recall one example (under H2020) in which we had to reduce the management and overhead category of a MSCA grant by 50% during the grant preparation phase because of an operational grant in the same institution during the same time period.

***To demonstrate cost separation**, please note the following conditions must be fulfilled:*

- the operating grant may NOT cover 100% of the beneficiary's annual budget (i.e. it may not be a full operating grant)

- the beneficiary must use analytical accounting which allows for a cost accounting management with cost allocation keys and cost accounting codes and must apply these keys and codes to identify and separate the costs (i.e. to allocate them to either the action grant activities or the operating grant activities)

- the beneficiary must record:

1. all real costs incurred for the activities that are covered by their operating grants (i.e. personnel, general running costs and other operating costs linked to the work programme of activities) and

2. all real costs incurred for the activities that are covered by the action grant (including the real indirect costs linked to the action)

- The allocation of the costs must be done in a way that leads to a fair, objective and realistic result.

Please note the specific guidance under Horizon Europe are still under discussion (not publish yet). We will be able to provide definitive guidance beginning of 2023.

New guidelines (Financial and Special Leave)

MSCA FINANCIAL GUIDE (published on 1. December 2023)

Management of the MSCA Special Needs in H2020 legacy grants and Horizon Europe grant, Guidelines for MSCA beneficiaries (published on December 2023)

Publication fees paid from institutional contributions

Following the recent MSCA NCP meeting and REA training, I would like to ask for a clarification regarding eligible publication fees in MSCA projects.

On the page 41, the new MSCA Financial Guide states that „The only exception is that for MSCA projects there is no specific cost eligibility rule imposing that only publication fees in full open access venues for peer-reviewed scientific publications are eligible for reimbursement. Therefore, institutional contributions can be used for all types of publication fees."

During the meeting, however, we received an answer that „Open access to scientific publications (HE) — In addition to fulfilling the other costs eligibility criteria, publication fees are ONLY eligible when publishing in full open access publishing venues."

We are of the opinion that in MSCA, the rules stipulated in the Financial Guide hold true (as the use of institutional contributions is not subject to an audit and their eligibility depends on the eligibility of person-months of the fellow), but your feedback will be appreciated.

E-mail communication REA MSCA PF Team, 26 January, 2024

The HE Financial Guide clearly states on p. 41 that "*for MSCA projects there is no specific cost eligibility rule imposing that only publication fees in full open access venues for peer-reviewed scientific publications are eligible for reimbursement*".

Moreover, when comparing the HE Unit MGA with the HE General MGA it is notable that the sentence "*Only publication fees in full open access venues for peer-reviewed scientific publications are eligible for reimbursement*" can only be found on the HE General MGA (Annex 5 provisions on "Open Science", p.111). It is not included in the HE Unit MGA.

Therefore, we confirm that institutional contributions can be used for all types of publication fees in MSCA projects.

ERC

Charging full capitalised costs to the action

I have a question concerning the ERC StG Guide for Applicants, which states that*: …an applicant can request to include in the Grant Agreement equipment, infrastructure, or other assets purchased specifically for the action (or developed as part of the action tasks) that may exceptionally be*

declared as FULL capitalised costs. Where needed for the viability of the action (including its financial viability), and recorded under a fixed asset account of the beneficiary…
Q1: Do I understand correctly that applicants may request (as a part of the grant) the full purchase price of equipment in ERC grants?
Q2: Can you, please, indicate some examples of when this would be possible? Is it common/is it rare?
Q3: Should the applicants clearly state in the project proposal that they will be requesting the full price of the equipment (instead of respective depreciation costs)? Should they justify the choice in the project proposal?

Case no2072946, 18 October, 2022

The ERC Work Programme 2023 foresees the following : ”Purchases of equipment, infrastructure, or other assets used for the action must be declared as depreciation costs. Moreover, an applicant can request to include in the Grant Agreement equipment, infrastructure or other assets purchased specifically for the action (or developed as part of the action tasks) that may exceptionally be declared as full capitalised costs, where needed for the viability of the action (including its financial viability), and recorded under a fixed asset account of the beneficiary in compliance with international accounting standards and the beneficiary’s usual cost accounting practices”.

In reply to your first question, based on the 2023 ERC Work Programme , while depreciation costs is the default option, applicants may exceptionally request in their proposal to be submitted under ERC STG call, full capitalised costs for equipment, infrastructure or other assets, purchased specifically for the action (or developed as part of the action tasks), only if justified by the nature of the action and the context of the use of the equipment or assets.
‘Capitalised’ costs means recorded as assets in the beneficiary’s balance sheet. They may relate to:
- the full purchase costs (not only the depreciation costs for the relevant periodic report) and/or
- the full development costs (not only the depreciation costs for the relevant periodic report).
The costs must be recorded under a fixed asset account in the beneficiary’s accounting records in compliance with international accounting standards and the beneficiary’s usual cost accounting practices.
In reply to your second and third question, in line with the 2023 ERC Work Programme, **the full capitalised costs approach has to be exceptionally applied, where needed for the viability of the action (including the financial viability).** Any such request must be described in detail and fully justified in the proposal under Section “C. Resources”. The cost estimation should be as accurate as possible and in proportion to the actual needs. The evaluation panels will assess the estimated costs carefully against the needs of the project and may suggest modifications where they consider funding requests not properly justified.
For more information, you may consult the Horizon Europe Annotated Grant Agreement (PRE-DRAFT), pages 66 to 69 : aga_en.pdf (europa.eu). In particular, page 68 provides the details on how to implement the “full capitalised costs” option and clarifies that the cost must correspond to the actual costs incurred in the purchase or development, and the beneficiary has to ensure that there is no double charging of costs (in particular in case of development of equipment).

Organization of workshops and conferences

I have a question concerning budget of an ERC project, specifically the cost category Publications (incl. Open Access fees) and dissemination. Since "dissemination" is explicitly mentioned here, is it acceptable to include costs of dissemination activities such as the organization of workshops or even

conferences? Or is it preferable that such costs are planned within the "Other additional direct costs"? If so, what should be included in the former category concerning dissemination costs?"

Case no 155137, 29 April, 2022

"The organization of workshops and conferences maybe be included under "**Dissemination and Publication" costs**. In case the proposal is selected for funding, and if it is necessary, the project officer will clarify with the PI how to best include costs during the preparation of the Grant Agreement."

⚠ Description of existing resources not requiring EU funding

I have a question regarding budget drafting in ERC proposals, regardless of their specific type. In the Information for Applicants, the following instruction is provided:
"Describe any **existing resources not requiring EU funding** that will be used for the project, such as infrastructure and equipment."
Could you please confirm whether this section **is entirely optional**? Specifically, if there are no relevant infrastructure or equipment resources that do not require EU funding, should the applicant simply leave this section blank?
Alternatively, do you prefer that the applicant provides a broader description of the general resources and support available at the Host Institution, as illustrated in the example below?
Example: Existing Resources at the Host Institution (HI)
The HI provides essential infrastructure and research support at no additional cost to the project. This includes access to core administrative services and institutional IT infrastructure, including data storage and standard computational resources. The HI also offers institutional support for research ethics compliance, grant management, and career development services for researchers. Additionally, the project will benefit from the HI's established academic network and collaboration opportunities, facilitating knowledge exchange and interdisciplinary research.
Any guidance/example or clarification you can provide would be greatly appreciated.

E-mail communication – ERC-ADG-GRANTING, 2 February 2025
The budget section C. Resources of the proposal should state the amount of funding considered necessary to fulfil the research objectives. During the evaluation of the proposal, this section will be used by the panel to facilitate the assessment of the estimated resources. The budget should include concise description of any resources foreseen for use by the project, including infrastructure and equipment, which reflect actual needs in fulfilment of the research objectives.

If the "Total Estimated Eligible Costs" is higher than the maximum "Requested EU contribution", it is recommended to **specify which items or resources will be covered by the host institution from its own resources, or by other external sources**.

⚠ Seconded persons (A.3) working fully remotely from abroad

I would like to request for clarification regarding **the eligibility of costs for seconded persons by a third party against payment under Article 6.2.A.3 MGA**.
We are increasingly encountering cases, namely in ERC grants, where team members need to work full-time from their home institution abroad for well-justified research reasons (e.g., access to specific archives, infrastructure, or research facilities). At the same time, adding their home institution as a beneficiary does not appear to be a viable or efficient solution, particularly where

several team members are involved under such arrangements in different countries/organizations. Employment of these researchers directly by the PI's host institution is, in practice, either not possible or extremely difficult and often requires the involvement of specialised legal advisors, generating substantial additional costs.
From previous replies to Legal & Financial NCPs, I understand that secondment normally requires the seconded person to work at the beneficiary's premises, although in specific cases this may be agreed otherwise in the secondment agreement. Against this background, may I ask whether, in specific and duly justified cases—such as the involvement of multiple researchers worldwide who need to work fully remotely for research-related reasons—it would be **acceptable for seconded persons to work fully from abroad?** This would, of course, be under the supervision of the PI's host institution, which does not seem problematic given current digital tools and established online working practices.
If so, I would appreciate clarification on how this should be reconciled with the following example in the Annotated Grant Agreement: "The beneficiary does not require any presence at its premises and allows all its employees to telework full-time from anywhere in the world. The person chooses to telework from home, i.e. the country where the seconding organisation is established."
In practice, I am not aware of any research organisation in Czechia that allows all employees, to telework full-time from anywhere in the world (and I assume the situation is similar in other countries). It is a usual practice to agree on full remote work on a case-by-case basis with individual employees.
It would indeed be unfortunate if this very useful and flexible option were effectively excluded due to a strict reading of this AGA example.
Could you please confirm, specifically for ERC research teams:
Q1. Whether a researcher may be seconded and work fully remotely from abroad due to specific research-related reasons (e.g. access to archives or infrastructure); and if YES,
Q2. Whether such an arrangement may be agreed on a case-by-case basis, even if it is not explicitly foreseen in the organisation's internal rules?

Case number 7144381, date: 21 January, 2026

The related provisions in the Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement read that costs for persons seconded by a third party against payment are eligible if the costs fulfil the general eligibility conditions, and the seconded persons assigned to the action work under conditions similar to those of an employee (in particular regarding the way the work is organised, the tasks that are performed and the premises where they are performed)

When the specific eligibility conditions on seconded personnel are not met, the employer of that team member is usually added as beneficiary.

Nevertheless, there is the possibility to have a **seconded person not performing the tasks in the beneficiary's premises**. This possibility is provided for in the Horizon Europe Annotated Grant Agreement in specific cases and as long as this is clearly agreed in the secondment agreement (incl. the confirmation of the beneficiary's control and instructions over the work of the seconded person). Therefore, in such cases, **the reasons leading the seconded staff not to work in the beneficiary's premises must be justified and it should be agreed in the secondment agreement**, including the means to ensure the principal investigator' scientific supervision. Specific reasons could be that the seconded person needs to have access to a particular infrastructure/installation which is physically located abroad.

Note that those matters should be **discussed with the project officer** in charge to review the eligibility conditions and the specificities of the case.

⚠ Researcher costs under Purchase Costs category (C.3)

I have a question concerning the current ERC AdG lump sum call. As stated in EU Grants: How to manage your lump sum grants: V1.3 – 01.06.2025, p. 5, when preparing an indicative budget for lump sum projects, the same principles apply as for grants based on actual costs.

> Keep in mind that for this type of lump sum, the cost estimations must be an approximation of your actual costs. They must be:
>
> - in line with the same eligibility rules as in actual costs grants of the programme, i.e. cost estimations can be included only if the same cost item/type of cost would be eligible in an actual cost grant *(see AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement, art. 6*)*
> - in line with your normal practices
> - reasonable/not excessive
> - in line with and necessary for the activities proposed.

One of our PIs intends to involve a senior researcher from a renowned European university (UEU), whose expertise is highly relevant to the project. The researcher will remain employed by UEU, while the Czech Host Institution will pay UEU for the researcher's remuneration, as well as an additional fee charged by UEU for releasing the researcher.
According to the Annotated Grant Agreement, V 2.0, p. 63, I understand that if such a payment includes a fee or commercial margin (or other non-personnel costs), the indicative costs for UEU should be budgeted under Purchase Costs, rather than under Personnel Costs.

> ⚠ If the costs do not fulfil all the conditions indicated here above, they may be eligible as purchase of services *(see Article 6.2.C.3)* or subcontracting *(see Article 6.2.B)* but **NOT** as personnel costs.
>
> ⚠ Thus, for seconded persons, if the resulting daily rate is higher than the daily rate actually paid by the third party to the seconded person (applying the calculation rules of the Grant Agreement) the costs can NOT be declared as personnel costs. They may be eligible instead as purchase of services *(see Article 6.2.C.3)* or subcontracting *(see Article 6.2.B)*. The reason is that in this case the payment made by the beneficiary to the third party would be **higher than the actual remuneration** of the person, and this implies that there is a commercial margin (or other non-personnel cost) that is being charged by the third party to the beneficiary.

Could you please confirm whether this interpretation is correct? Any advice or recommendations would be greatly appreciated, as we wish to ensure that the budget is accurate and that the panel will not be surprised to see one of the team members budgeted under Purchase Costs.

E-mail communication – ERC-ADG-GRANTING, 8 August, 2025

If the conditions to consider the researcher as seconded staff are not met (see also p. 61 AGA), indeed you could budget the costs either under purchase costs or subcontracting.

Kindly note that if the researcher would actually be described as a team member (depending on the work and involvement in the project), the estimated costs should probably be considered as **subcontracting**.

Indeed purchase costs is a category covering goods and supply as well as support tasks. If the role of the researcher in the project would be research tasks, then it would go beyond "purchase costs" scope, and rather fall under subcontracting (external entity performing action task). If the role of the researcher is of **ad hoc advisory nature**, the estimated costs could be budgeted under "purchase costs".

In addition, purchase costs or subcontracting must comply with the specific eligibility criteria as per the grant agreement.

Finally, for the sake of completeness, if the role of the researcher is of such nature that **the project is dependant of his/her contribution, UEU should then be added as an additional beneficiary rather than a subcontracto**r. In that case, only personnel costs (without additional fees) could be budgeted (as well as any other costs that would be incurred by UEU in the course of the project). For example, if it is expected that the researcher would work the whole duration of the project for a significant percentage of time, this may go beyond the role of a subcontractor.

Follow-up question

Thank you for your helpful reply. I understand that in ERC grants the needs of the PI can at times be highly specific—for example, they may intend to collaborate with a particular individual or team because of unique expertise or a history of successful cooperation. In such cases, when these costs are categorised as Purchases or Subcontracting, it can be difficult to demonstrate compliance with the "best value for money" principle, as no competitive selection is possible when the expertise in question is unique.

In lump sum grants, purchases and subcontracting must be estimated in line with the same eligibility rules as in actual cost grants. However, unlike in actual cost grants, lump sum grants involve neither cost reporting nor financial audits.

My question is therefore: **can evaluators or panels challenge such Purchases or Subcontracting** if it is clear from the proposal that a competitive selection cannot be carried out due to the identification of a specific expert or team? In the worst-case scenario, could they **even reduce the allocated budget for these items?** While I understand that this would not typically occur in grants based on actual costs, I would appreciate confirmation that the evaluation approach for lump sum grants remains aligned.

E-mail communication – ERC-ADG-GRANTING, 25 August, 2025

Overall, the **evaluation principles are the same for lump sums and actual costs grants**. The panel has always the possibility to reduce the requested amount if the panel considers that the estimated costs are considered excessive, not reasonable or not needed for the project.

This would apply to all categories of costs, including subcontracting or purchase costs.

In that sense, the type of costs model does not change the approach of the panel. The panel is independent in their decision.

As for the selection procedure of suppliers, kindly note that the AGA provides some cases where the absence of competitive selection procedure might be acceptable. To be noted that the **host institution must have the procedure providing for such/similar exceptions in place in their own usual accounting practices**.