



EUTOPIA-SIF

**Science and Innovation
Fellowship Programme**

GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS

Post-Doctoral Fellowships

Second call for applications – 2021-2022



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 945380.



The aim of this guide is to provide potential applicants with practical information on how to apply, and a description of the assessment procedure. For further and up-to-date information, please visit the website:

<https://eutopia-university.eu/sif-fellowships-second-call/>

The EUTOPIA-SIF application process has changed from the first call:

- an optional pre-application stage has been added in order to help the candidates to find a host research group (see part 4.3),
- a support letter from at least one research group selected by the candidate as HOSTING Group is now required in the application (see Part 4.4),
- The two reference letters are expected to be requested by the applicants before the deadline, on 10 January 2022, 13:00 CET. Recommenders will still be able to upload letters until 20 January 2022 at 23:59 CET.
- an eligibility check list has been added in Annex 1 to enable applicants to verify if their application meets all the eligibility criteria.

Call for applications 2021/22

Version 1.1: September 2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Overview	4
2	Academic Environment: The EUTOPIA European University	5
2.1	The EUTOPIA Alliance	5
2.2	The EUTOPIA partner universities.....	5
2.3	Key research areas	7
3	About the EUTOPIA SIF Fellowship Programme	8
3.1	Aims of the programme	8
3.2	Host / co-host universities & secondments.....	8
3.3	Training and career development.....	10
3.4	Conditions of the fellowship	11
3.4.1	Start date and duration of the fellowship	11
3.4.2	Employment conditions.....	11
3.4.3	Working and living conditions	13
4	Application procedure.....	14
4.1	Eligibility criteria.....	15
4.2	Online application system & deadline	16
4.3	Pre- application stage	17
4.4	Application stage.....	17
4.5	Ethics.....	20
5	Evaluation and selection procedure	21
5.1	Main steps of the procedure	21
5.2	Evaluation criteria and selection.....	23
6	Contact	25
7	Annex 1-Eligibility check list	26

The EUTOPIA Science and Innovation Fellowship Programme (EUTOPIA-SIF) has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation programme under grant agreement number 945380, and is co-funded by the member universities of EUTOPIA. It is led by CY Cergy-Paris Université.

1 Overview

The EUTOPIA European University is pleased to announce the opening of **21 post-doctoral fellowships** under the EUTOPIA Science and Innovation Fellowships Programme (EUTOPIA-SIF). Positions will start in September 2022 at EUTOPIA partner universities.

The EUTOPIA European University is an ambitious alliance of six like-minded European universities: [CY Cergy Paris Université](#) (France), the [Universitat Pompeu Fabra](#) (Spain), the [Vrije Universiteit Brussel](#) (Belgium), the [Göteborgs Universitet](#) (Sweden), the [Univerza v Ljubljani](#) (Slovenia) and the [University of Warwick](#) (United Kingdom). It was selected as one of the first Erasmus+ ‘European Universities’ pilot projects. The core mission of EUTOPIA is to promote a connected and inclusive academic community, addressing global and local challenges, advancing excellence, inclusion, impact and innovation.

The aim of the EUTOPIA-SIF programme is to enhance the **research excellence and career perspectives of outstanding young researchers** from around the world. It will provide the opportunity for early career researchers to develop their independent research in the scope of an interdisciplinary scientific project and undertake **training**. Fellows will be hosted by one of the EUTOPIA partner universities and will be offered extensive **mobility** opportunities within EUTOPIA and beyond.

EUTOPIA-SIF contributes to the overarching ambition of the EUTOPIA Alliance to strengthen Europe’s human capital base by fostering the academic development of young high-profile scientists enabling them to conduct tangible, impactful research through **innovation and entrepreneurship** and to prove their capacity to **address major societal challenges** through five Key Research Areas, while interacting with the programme’s wide network of academic and non-academic partners.

Applications are invited from **all disciplines**, including Science, Social Sciences and Humanities and the Arts, which are linked to the following **5 Key Research Areas**:

- Materials Engineering;
- Data & Intelligence;
- Health;
- Sustainability;
- Welfare & Inclusion.

The EUTOPIA-SIF programme is coordinated by CY Cergy Paris Université.

What makes EUTOPIA-SIF fellowships stand out?

- A 2-year employment contract as a MSCA COFUND fellow with attractive financial and working conditions at one of the EUTOPIA university;
- An interdisciplinary and collaborative research project at one of the EUTOPIA-SIF universities;
- A strong focus on international and intersectoral mobility, with secondment periods to at least one other EUTOPIA-SIF university and to one of the programme’s external partners;
- An opportunity for outstanding recognised researchers to develop their own independent research ideas;
- A rich training programme focusing on research leadership skills and active career counselling during the programme with academic supervisors
- An individual research budget for research expenses, mobility and workshop organisation.

2 Academic Environment: The EUTOPIA European University

2.1 The EUTOPIA Alliance

The EUTOPIA Science and Innovation Fellowships programme (EUTOPIA-SIF) is a joint initiative launched by the EUTOPIA Alliance, a network of six universities that was awarded an Erasmus+ 'European Universities' pilot project in 2019.

The core mission of the EUTOPIA Alliance is to promote a connected and inclusive academic community, addressing global and local challenges, advancing excellence and inclusion, geared towards impact and fostering European economic development and innovation through a deep engagement of the Alliance with its local and regional ecosystems. The promotion of scientific excellence, research collaboration and mobility of academics among the partner universities is a core objective of EUTOPIA.

2.2 The EUTOPIA partner universities

The following six partner universities form the EUTOPIA alliance and are the founders of the EUTOPIA-SIF programme:

- **CY Cergy Paris Université** (CYU) was formed in January 2020 following a merger of Université de Cergy-Pontoise, EISTI school of engineering and Université Paris Seine. The ESSEC Business School is associated by decree with CY Cergy Paris Université. Both institutions have joined forces with an ambitious project, the CY Initiative, which has the objective to boost their research potential and international attractiveness. Together, they have been selected by the French government as one of the 19 French Universities of Excellence. CYU appears in the top quartile of French institutions for several size-adjusted indicators of research performance, including ERC nominations. It is a multidisciplinary, mid-sized French university with significant recognition for the quality of its research and innovation. It runs two national centres of excellence in the fields of Modelling Sciences (economics, mathematics, physics, computer science and finance) and Material Heritage Restoration and Conservation (experimental sciences and humanities). CYU is ranked in the top 300 of the THE Young Universities ranking, in the world top 200 in Mathematics and top 300 in Economics (ARWU). ESSEC is one of the world's leading Business Schools, ranked in the world top 200 in Management and top 150 in Finance (ARWU) in the world top 10 for various Master programmes (QS, Financial Times and The Economist);

- **Universitat Pompeu Fabra** (UPF) is a public, international and research-intensive university created in 1990, currently among the top universities in Europe. Awarded a CEI label (International Excellence Campus) by the Spanish Ministry of Education, the university performs very well in the most influential rankings. It is the first Spanish university in the world Top 150 (THE2020) and the 10th-ranked young university worldwide among those <50 years, ranked fifth in Europe and first in Spain (THE2020). Likewise, it ranks first among Spanish universities in number of articles per researcher published in the most influential scholarly journals in the world, first Spanish university in terms of the percentage of papers produced in collaboration with national institutions, and second in the percentage of papers produced in collaboration with foreign institutions (CWTS Leiden ranking 2019). It also tops the indicator in Spain for the number of citations of articles by its researchers (QS World University Rankings 2020).

UPF has a strong international dimension: 45% of Master's and PhD students in 2019-2020 were international; 43% of graduates studied abroad; and 27% of the teaching staff is international. UPF is highly competitive in research and has been awarded over 156 projects in Horizon 2020 (>75M€), including 31 ERC Grants and 57 Marie Curie Actions. Through the EU 7th Framework Programme, it was awarded 145 projects and more than 75M€. These participations include a COFUND programme (UPFellows 2014-2019) co-financing 24 international fellowships with a budget of 5,48M€ and an EU Contribution of 2,19M€. Likewise, it aims to transform education to respond to future challenges by combining a strong dedication to excellence in research with great training capacity (first Spanish university in doctoral theses read per researcher and first-ranked in number of Spanish Ministry predoctoral grants (FPU and FPI) per 100 lecturers -IUNE Report, 2019). In April 2014, it was the first Spanish University to obtain the "HR Excellence in Research" distinction.;

- **Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB)** is a competitive, high-quality, socially committed and internationally-oriented university located in Brussels. VUB offers high quality education to more than 17,000 students on three main campuses (Humanities, Sciences & Engineering, Health, Photonics). We have more than 160 research groups working on 4 campuses and including the 6000 medical staff at the university hospital we are one of the biggest centers of knowledge in the European Capital and the highest ranked organization in Brussels for the number of participations in Horizon 2020. The VUB contributes to Brussels being an Innovation Leader whose performance increases with time and scores high on the number of scientific co-publications. Thanks to this expertise and its strategic location, the VUB is the ideal partner for prestigious research with an outlook on Europe and the world. The university therefore is an avid participant in European projects, and in particular in H2020-projects. There are more than 160 running research projects at VUB which are (co-)funded by the European Union, 20% of which are coordinated by VUB.

- **Göteborgs Universitet (GU)** is among the largest universities in Northern Europe with approximately 47,000 students and around 3,000 academic staff. With its eight faculties, GU is also one of the most wide-ranging and versatile universities in Sweden. It is a powerhouse in the Health Sciences and in Social Sciences such as Public Administration and Political Sciences, as shown by the Shanghai Subject Rankings, but is renowned in many more fields (it is present in 31 of the 54 Subjects of the ranking). GU has participated in 131 H2020 projects (20 ERC and 62 MSCA);

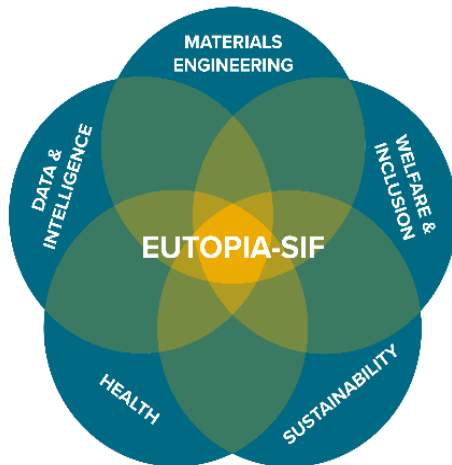
- **Univerza v Ljubljani (UL)** is the oldest and largest higher education and foremost scientific research institution in Slovenia (see Shanghai ARWU ranking). It consists of 23 faculties and 3 art academies offering study programmes in all academic fields. As with GU, Ljubljana's wide thematic spread and consistent level of excellence is documented by the fact, that it is represented in 32 subjects in the Shanghai ranking, with particular strengths in Mathematics, Sciences and Engineering subjects, in Business Administration and Economics as well as in Agricultural and Food Sciences. UL has participated in 158 H2020 projects (4 ERC and 31 MSCA);

- **University of Warwick (UW)** is one of the world's leading research universities in all academic fields and in September 2021 was ranked in the world's top 80 universities in THE (Times Higher Education) 2022 World University Rankings and in the top 10 UK universities in the Times and The Sunday Times Good University Guide. The excellence of Warwick's research environment is evidenced by its ranking of 7th in the UK in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework, with 87% of Warwick's research rated as 'world leading' or 'internationally excellent', and 19 departments ranked in the top ten in the UK. Warwick research has a strong record of interdisciplinary, intersectoral and international research collaborations and it is home to many major research centres working across disciplinary and other boundaries to address [major global research priorities](#).

2.3 Key research areas

The EUTOPIA-SIF programme focuses on 5 Key Research Areas (KRA), rooted in the Mission Statement of the EUTOPIA Alliance, that are central to understanding and changing the future of our planet and of the technologies that shape our lives and the societies we will live in.

EUTOPIA-SIF applications are welcomed in the following key research areas:



1. **Materials engineering:** *including* advanced analytical science, photonics, new material science, quantum technology
2. **Data & Intelligence:** *including* artificial intelligence, complexity, mathematical modelling, information-systems engineering
3. **Health:** *including* immunology and antibacterial resistance, cancer, ageing, reproductive health, neurosciences
4. **Sustainability:** *including* energy, circular economy, mobility, urban planning, material heritage, water management
5. **Welfare & Inclusion:** *including* business management and finance, governance, ethics, inequality, law and demography.

Interdisciplinary interactions are encouraged within the programme. EUTOPIA-SIF is built on the principle that major scientific and societal challenges can only be solved through the collaboration of experts from different areas. Applicants are thus invited to consider the interdisciplinary dimension of their research proposal. The above list of disciplines is indicative and non-limiting. Applications are invited from **all disciplines**, including Science, the Social Sciences, the Humanities and Art in connection with the above key research areas.

More information about the EUTOPIA-SIF research groups linked to each KRA can be found [here](#).

3 About the EUTOPIA SIF Fellowship Programme

3.1 Aims of the programme

EUTOPIA-SIF fellows will be able to develop and refine their skills as leading researchers and increase their ability to pursue careers at the interface between academia and the private sector. These skills will be fostered during the EUTOPIA-SIF programme as it will allow fellows to:

- Engage in multidisciplinary research projects to address key societal challenges identified in the Key Research Areas;
- Adopt an open perspective on their research project and career plan: to go beyond the boundaries of academic disciplines and engage in intersectoral (through regular contacts with non-academic partners, including secondment) and inter-disciplinary exchange and collaboration (by participating in the joint scientific activities of a large multidisciplinary group of fellows);
- Increase their ability to impact the economic sector by developing an acute entrepreneurial and innovation awareness;
- Develop a versatile research profile, with valuable transversal skills and research management skills;
- Develop a strong network for future collaborations and integration in the international research community;
- Contribute to the international outreach of the EUTOPIA Alliance, through internal and external secondments, the participation to international symposiums and high-quality scientific publications.
- Participate in competitive calls for proposals (including Horizon Europe, national funding agencies);

The quality of the research environment that EUTOPIA-SIF fellows will experience is key for attaining these objectives. It includes:

- Over 100 [research groups and departments](#) associated with EUTOPIA-SIF Key Research Areas;
- Competent, committed and available academic supervisors;
- Excellent equipment and infrastructures in each department;
- A wide [network of partners](#) to EUTOPIA universities including international academic institutions, private companies, government and third sector organizations.

The EUTOPIA-SIF programme will enable fellows to take full advantage of this environment, thanks to integrated mobility periods (secondments), training and career development services and attractive employment conditions.

3.2 Host / co-host universities & secondments

Each EUTOPIA-SIF fellow will be hosted by one of the EUTOPIA partner universities and co-hosted by a second EUTOPIA university.

The host university: the host university will be the fellow's employer. The fellow will carry out the major part of the research project in the Host research group, belonging to the host university.

The fellow's project supervisor will also belong to a research group of the host university.

The co-host university: the internal secondment of 2 to 6 months will be carried out in the co-host university and the related research group.

Host and co-host institutions must be chosen by the fellows at the time of their application, as well as the research groups in which they wish to conduct the fellowship within each university, at the time of application (part. 4.4).

The present call is expected to award at least 21 fellowship positions, with the following provisional hosting capacity across EUTOPIA-SIF partner institutions:

Table 1 – Hosting capacity in EUTOPIA-SIF universities						
EUTOPIA-SIF universities	CYU	UPF	VUB	GU	UL	UW
Call 2021/22	7	2	4	1	2	5

NB: restrictions on eligible working groups

For **VUB**, **not all the research groups are eligible** to EUTOPIA-SIF programme. Only 11 research groups are eligible as HOST or for EUTOPIA-SIF fellows. The list of eligible groups can be found [here](#). However, all VUB research groups can be chosen as CO-HOST. In case of difficulties, applicants may seek advice with the VUB Local Programme Manager (see Part 6).

UL has many research groups spread across many departments in the 26 faculties and academies. To find the most appropriate research group, please consult the faculty website (available via the Research group list on EUTOPIA SIF website) and/or contact the faculty research department of the faculty and the UL Local Programme Manager.

For CYU, UPF, GU, UL and UW all research groups are eligible to host or co-host to EUTOPIA-SIF fellows.

The choice of host and co-host universities will form the basis for the mobility opportunities within EUTOPIA and beyond during the programme. **Two compulsory secondments** will allow fellows to take full advantage of the EUTOPIA alliance network, as well as the numerous global academic collaborations of the EUTOPIA partners with leading international institutions and direct collaborations with key [industrial and institutional partners](#). This stimulating environment, combining a wide range of disciplines accessible to the fellows, will enable them to interact horizontally across academic disciplines and vertically with the non-academic sector.

As part of the EUTOPIA-SIF programme fellows will undertake:

- **An internal secondment:** to their chosen EUTOPIA co-host university¹, for a period of 2 to 6 months. The secondment phase can be done in a single period or divided into different mobility periods. An additional secondment period at another EUTOPIA-SIF university can also be organized;

¹ The co-host university must be one of the 6 EUTOPIA-SIF participating universities.

- **An external secondment:** to a non-academic organisation relevant to the fellow's research project or to an international university external to the EUTOPIA Alliance, for a period of 2 weeks to 3 months.

Fellows will receive an **individual budget** to undertake **research-related mobility** (participation in international conferences, conference organisation, use of external research facilities, secondment at an international academic or non-academic organisation relevant to their research project, etc.).

3.3 Training and career development

Fellows in the EUTOPIA-SIF programme are given full freedom to conduct research on a topic of their choice within the 5 Key Research Areas, all of which are highly relevant to society. The programme promotes independence of the fellows in order to enable them to develop original, innovative and potentially disruptive research projects.

To raise their profile as leading researchers, fellows will join a rich **training programme that** focuses on general research skills and transferable skills, and complements their disciplinary skills. It will consist of scientific lectures, academic and professional skills training, and career and leadership mentoring.

Recognised international scientists will mentor the fellows' research projects and career development. The **academic supervision** and **individualized career mentoring** will help each fellow to define an ambitious yet feasible professional pathway towards a successful career as a research leader. By exploring different options with their supervisors, fellows will be able to define their long-term goals in a Career Development Plan. This will provide them with valuable tools to plan and manage their career and reinforce their self-confidence. It will also improve their ability to identify the right career, research, entrepreneurial and innovation opportunities.

Each fellow will have a primary academic supervisor from the host university who will guide the fellow in the conduct of their research programme, act as an active mentor and help the fellow identify and revise their research development and training needs as well as in implementing strategies to address them. The supervisor is expected to introduce the fellow into faculty life and activities, e.g. contributing to seminar series, participating in staff meetings, etc. and assist the fellow in establishing contact with other partners if pertinent.

Each fellow will also have a secondary supervisor at the co-host university. Secondary supervisors will provide complementary guidance, facilitate the integration of the fellow during their mobility and provide additional diversity – interdisciplinary composition of supervisor panels is encouraged.

In addition, for external secondment(s), secondment counsellor(s) will be identified within the secondment host(s) institutions/companies, to guide the fellow's research activity and to provide advice on an ongoing basis.

3.4 Conditions of the fellowship

3.4.1 Start date and duration of the fellowship

Fellows will be awarded a position for 24 months, **starting in September 2022**².

Researchers must devote solely and full-time to the research activities and training. However, parental, sick, military and care leaves will be accepted. No extension of the fellowship is possible, unless duly justified beforehand (see Part. 3.4.2).

3.4.2 Employment conditions

Fellows will be appointed according to the regular fixed-term salaried employment contract in accordance with the national regulations of their host university. The university will pay a salary in compliance with common practice within its institution and the same working conditions, rights and obligations as for other employees and researchers will apply to the fellows. Employment conditions will be in line with the European Charter and Code for Researchers³.

Fellows will be entitled to the statutory benefits granted by national regulations (VUB, GU, UL) and/or hosting institution rules (CY, UPF, UW) for working hours, flexi-time, paid annual leave, sick leave, parental leave, social security coverage, unemployment, pension insurance and family allowance. In all six universities, the social security regime in effect in each host country will cover your health insurance, maternity, invalidity, insurance against workplace accidents, pension insurance, unemployment insurance and family allowances⁴. Please note that Belgium (VUB) offers a specific regime for citizens from non-EU and EEA countries and from countries with no bilateral agreement with the host country⁵.

EUTOPIA-SIF partners offer flexible working conditions accommodating career breaks, part-time or compressed hours as well as making provision for home-based activity to accommodate personal requirements such as child-care, disability, or other care responsibilities.

² EUTOPIA-SIF fellowships from one call must start at the same time. This is important for the programme's functioning, and thus obligatory. each EUTOPIA-SIF call forms a cohort of fellows, with joint activities and a joint training programme.

³ Read more about the European Charter and Code for Researchers here: <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/charter>

⁴ Except those hosted by the University of Ljubljana, due to local regulations that do not allow extra payments for family allowance, while all other statutory benefits are included in basic pay: social security coverage, medical insurance, basic pension scheme etc.

⁵ According to Belgian regulations, international fellows working at Belgian universities will be paid a tax-free stipend that equals at least the net salary of a research associate. This specific statute 'postdoctoral fellow in the framework of international mobility' applies for fellows that have not resided or carried out their main activity (employment, studies, etc.) in Belgium for more than 24 months during the 3 years immediately preceding the first postdoctoral assignment. Equal employment conditions apply for postdocs, whether they are appointed with a contract or a stipend.

To support EUTOPIA-SIF activities, fellows will be entitled to the following allowances and endowments for the 2 years of fellowship:

Table 2 – Allowances and endowments for EUTOPIA-SIF fellows		
Allowance	Description	Total amount for 2 years
Living and mobility allowance	Salary paid to the fellow during the contract, subject to national taxes and regulations.	See table 3 below <i>paid to fellow</i>
Relocation allowance	For moving expenses, visa fees, etc. To be paid at the start of the fellowship ⁶	2 000€ <i>paid to fellow</i>
Research expenses	For costs associated with your research project (incl. computer equipment, workshop organization, submission fees, consumables and other expenses). This minimum amount will be adjusted to take into account variations across disciplines.	4700€ (estimated amount) <i>Accessible via host research centre</i>
Travel allowance	For travel costs associated with your period of secondment and mobility.	3 500€ (estimated amount) <i>Accessible via host research centre</i>

Fellows will receive a monthly average living and mobility gross allowance of 4349 €. This average amount will be adjusted across host institutions to account for differences in cost of living and payroll taxes. Living allowances have been designed to offer attractive salary conditions to recognised researchers, whilst harmonizing living conditions across institutions to compensate for differences in cost of living and payroll taxes.

Table 3 – Living and mobility allowance						
	CYU	UPF	VUB	GU	UL	UW
Monthly gross living and mobility allowance (€)	4 733€	3 965€	3 836€	5 456€	3 874€	4 405€
Estimated net salary before national income tax (€)	2 700€	2 822€	2 525€	3 543€	2 616€	3 393€

For more information on the employment conditions at each university, please see [MSCA fellows information package](#), MSCA national contact points country factsheets⁷ and feel free to contact the local programme manager of your prospective host university for more details (part 6).

Special needs and disability

The MSCA Special Needs Allowance will cover additional costs (*e.g.* adaptation of work environment, mobility) entailed by long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments of researchers and staff members with disabilities. Additional support is available to special-needs researchers and staff.

⁶ Except for fellows hosted at UL where the relocation allowance will be included in the monthly salary and distributed throughout the 2-year employment period at UL.

⁷ France : https://www.horizon2020.gouv.fr/cid79134/boite-outils-pour-les-actions-marie-sklodowska-curie.html#document_pcn ; for more information, please refer to EUTOPIA-SIF local programme managers (part 6)

3.4.3 Working and living conditions

Fellows will have the opportunity to conduct their research activities in excellent working conditions in each EUTOPIA-SIF partner university.

To comply with the transnational mobility requirements, Fellows must be based in the country of their employing institution and will primarily be based at that institution. Remote working and access to the EUTOPIA-SIF programme will not be permitted.

They will be provided with office space, IT facilities and, if required, laboratory resources and access to technology platforms within the academic department or research group relevant to their subject area.

Specific conditions: fellows hosted by CY Cergy Paris Université and the University of Warwick will be jointly affiliated with their respective Institute for Advanced Studies⁸, alongside their affiliation with the research group relevant for their research.

They will receive support from the dedicated international relations and mobility offices at each partner university for mobility-related queries, and will be assisted before and after their arrival at the EUTOPIA-SIF host university with administrative matters like visas, permits, registrations and health insurance, local educational system for children, etc. Importantly, CYU, VUB and GU host EURAXESS centres and UL closely collaborates with one. They will help the fellows and their families to plan and organize their move, providing assistance in all matters related to mobility and administrative issues. All EURAXESS Network services are free of charge.

If fellows do not speak the language of their host country, they will have access to language courses at your host university's Center for Language, which shall be funded by the programme's training allowance (3.4.2), unless language courses are provided for free at the fellow's host university.

All six universities will offer support to researchers in their search for accommodation. Rental accommodation is available relatively close to each university's campus and all universities are connected to an extensive public transportation network providing easy access to international airports and railways.

⁸ IAS Warwick (https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/ias/), IEA CYU (<https://advancedstudies.cyu.fr/>),

4 Application procedure

The EUTOPIA SIF 2nd call for proposals will open on 20 September 2021 and will offer an optional pre-application stage in order to help candidates identify a host research group. The pre-application stage is described below (Part 4.3).

Candidates may choose between two scenarios before submitting their application by the call deadline:

	Scenario 1	Scenario 2
From 20 September 2021	Registration on EUTOPIA platform (part 4.2)	Registration on EUTOPIA platform (part 4.2)
From 20 September to 25 October 2021 (13:00 CET).	Pre application stage (see part 4.3)	<Skip the pre application stage>
From 20 September 2021 to 10 January 2022 (13:00 CET)	Application stage	Application stage

4.1 Eligibility criteria

The fellowship positions are open to any researcher with a doctoral degree or with at least four years of full-time equivalent research experience. Candidates must not have a permanent position at the start of the fellowship and must comply with the Marie-Sklodowska Curie mobility rule (table 4). No age or nationality conditions apply.

Eligibility of the researcher

Table 4 – Eligibility criteria	
Criterion	Rule
Diploma	Diploma certificate in English (accompanied with a non-certified English translation if the initial document is not in English) OR a provisional PhD certificate — certificate on headed paper from their supervisor/academic institution attesting that they will complete their PhD viva by the due date, OR mandatory template detailing 4 years of full-time equivalent research experience. Completion of PhD or equivalent experience by 15 April 2022.
Seniority & status	No seniority condition will be imposed in the programme, candidates must be recognized researchers ⁹ . However, as the fellowship is also a training and development scheme, candidates must not have a permanent position at the start of the fellowship. They have to be able to work exclusively on the fellowship project with a full-time contract from one of the EUTOPIA-SIF university. Candidates may be employed when applying but should resign and take up a full-time contract when selected.
Research topics	Applicants are entirely free in the design of their research project. However, they must indicate one or more of the programme’s Key Research Areas to characterise their project.
MSCA Mobility Rule	Researchers must not have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in the country of the selected primary host universities for more than 12 months in the 3 years prior to the date of appointment. Compulsory national service, short stays (<i>e.g.</i> holidays), and time spent applying for refugee status under the Geneva Convention are not considered. <i>The mobility rule need not apply to hosts of secondments.</i>
Nationality	The call is open to researchers of any nationality.
Formal proposal criteria	Completeness of application including all required support documents submitted before the deadline using the application platform. All submitted documents must comply with the page limits and other specifications detailed below and/or on the application portal. The application will otherwise not be accepted.
	Application submitted in English.
	Only one application per call and per fellow.

⁹ As defined by [EURAXESS](#).

Applicants who do not meet these criteria are not be eligible to apply for a EUTOPIA-SIF fellowship

Applicants who are offered a fellowship will be required to provide documentary evidence to prove they meet these criteria or the fellowship offer will be withdrawn.

In addition, the following criteria are essential in order to be considered for a fellowship award:

- Applicants should have a track record of producing research outputs such as peer-reviewed publications in which they have played a significant role, conference & research presentations and contributions to symposia and compiled volumes;
- Applicants must demonstrate a commitment to a research career and show how they will use the fellowship to advance this aim.

4.2 Online application system & deadline

Full application (and optional pre-application) to the EUTOPIA-SIF programme **MUST BE SUBMITTED ONLINE**, via the dedicated application platform: www.eutopia.smapply.io

- Application materials will be made available online from **20 September 2021**
- The submission of applications will be possible online from **20 September 2021**
- The deadline for submission of pre-applications is 25 October 2021, 13:00 CET.
- The deadline for submission of full applications is the **10 January 2022, 13:00 CET**

Only one proposal per researcher may be submitted to this call.

Only applications that are complete and submitted before the application deadline via the online platform will be considered.

How to access the online application system:

- Go to www.eutopia.smapply.io
- Choose EUTOPIA Science & Innovation Fellowship COFUND Programme
- Click on register and create an account using your email address and a personal password. It is important that you use a valid email address, since all further correspondence will be communicated to this email address.
- You will then receive an email with a green button that you must click on to validate your account. If you do not complete this stage, you will be able to fill in the application but not submit it.
- N.B. If you have used a SMaply application system in the past, your email may be recognized and you will simply need to enter your password (and not create another account). You may use the reset password function if necessary.

If you encounter any problems registering on the platform, please write to eutopia-sif@cyu.fr

- Once you have registered and logged into the system, the application can be edited until submission.

- When your full application has been submitted, it will be possible to modify it before the call deadline. You will still be able to reopen the application and modify it before the call deadline. In that case, it will be your responsibility to validate again each form ("mark as complete") in order to save your modifications. The last version submitted will prevail. It is recommended to download your application after final submission..
- All steps must be filled in and files uploaded (mandatory documents: part. 4.3). After the call deadline, the application can no longer be edited, and it is only possible to view the application.
- The application system SMAApply is available in any browser and on tablets both android and Apple.
- You will receive an automatically generated email receipt from the application system when the application is submitted correctly. The receipt may end up in the junk folder of your Inbox, so please ensure that you have received the receipt after submission.
- You will receive an automatically generated email confirming (or not) the eligibility of your application in the 5 working days after the submission deadline.
- You will be able to follow the progress of your application by logging onto the platform.
- At each stage of the selection process, applicants will be notified electronically (part. 5)

4.3 Pre- application stage

In order to help candidates identify possible host research groups, the second EUTOPIA-SIF call has introduced an optional pre-application stage. At the pre-application stage, candidates submit CV information (no template at this stage), a short description of their research project (maximum 2 pages) and chose a discipline. At the closing of the pre-application stage, this information is shared with all research groups relevant to the candidate's research profile across the six EUTOPIA universities. These research groups are then invited to contact pre-applicants directly if they wish to.

NB:

- Pre-application is optional. It does not preclude the possibility of proceeding with the application.
- Pre-application does not guarantee pairing with a host group. It is solely meant to ensure widespread dissemination of candidates' expressions of interest within the EUTOPIA research community. The EUTOPIA-SIF coordination will not engage further in matching applicants with research groups after this step.
- In addition to submitting a pre-application, prospective candidates are also invited to directly contact relevant research groups that they may have identified (see below, Part 4.4).

Pre-application process:

- Opening: 20 September 2021
- Deadline: 25 October 2021, 13:00 CET
- Registration on EUTOPIA-SIF platform (see part 4.2)
- Submission of an abstract and choice of a discipline and a Key Research Area before the deadline of 25 October 2021.

4.4 Application stage

By the deadline of 10 January 2022, applicants must submit the following **compulsory application content**:

- **Detailed CV** of the candidate (section within the application platform “standardised CV”): incl. personal information, education background (undergraduate, graduate, doctorate and other degrees), professional activities, research activities track record and publication list; and a CV in pdf version using the dedicated template available on the application platform.
- **Choice of Key Research Area(s)**: They must select at least one Key Research Area relevant for their research proposal (part 2.3);
- **Choice of hosting institutions and research group(s)**: Applicants must submit, by order of preference, at least one and up to three pairs of host and co-host institutions, freely chosen among the six universities of the programme. For each choice, candidates must indicate the research group(s) that they plan to collaborate with. They may indicate prospective academic supervisors.
- **Research proposal** (mandatory template to be used, available on the application platform): research aims and methodology; relevance and added-value of proposed research compared to the state of the art; interdisciplinary contribution of research; integration in the EUTOPIA Alliance research environment including international and intersectoral mobility and secondment plan; output plan including publication and dissemination activities;
- **Personal statement** (maximum 2 pages – use of Times New Roman font and minimum size 11-no template): motivation, personal and career development objectives; activities envisaged to enhance academic profile; collaborations planned beyond higher education sector;
- **Support Letter from at least one hosting research group, refer to the section “requesting a support letter for the signature specification for each university”;**
- **Reference letters**: two letters must be requested from referees chosen by the candidate via the application platform assessing the applicant’s previous research activities, research capacity and work experience. The reference letters must be requested via the platform for submission of the application to be possible. Each referee will upload their letter onto the platform. If your referees have not uploaded their letters by the application deadline, a reminder will be sent to you and the referee. The reference letters must be requested by the call deadline, otherwise your application will be ineligible. Recommenders will still be able to upload letters until 20 January 2022 at 23:59 CET.
- **Suggestion of experts**: you may indicate 3 experts who are able to make an expert assessment of your fellowship proposal in the dedicated space on the submission platform. These experts may not have any conflict of interest (*i.e.* not former supervisors, colleagues, research collaborators, family related).
- **Ethics declaration** – checklist provided in the research proposal template to identify ethical matters relating to their research project (please check part. 4.5 for more details);
- **Copy of PhD certificate** in English (accompanied with a non-certified English translation if the initial document is not in English) OR a provisional PhD certificate — certificate on headed paper from their supervisor/academic institution attesting that they will complete their PhD viva by the due date, OR mandatory template detailing 4 years of full-time equivalent research experience. Completion of PhD or equivalent experience by 15 April 2022.

Finding a host and a co-host

In order to apply to EUTOPIA-SIF you have to choose at least one and up to 3 combinations of host and co-host universities.

You can choose freely your host and co-host university (and research groups), among EUTOPIA partner universities.

You will be able to indicate your choices on the application platform and select hosts and co-host with drop-down menus.

You may directly contact the EUTOPIA research groups using the Research group list available on EUTOPIA -SIF website [here](#).

Please note that for VUB only 11 research groups are eligible as HOST choices, you may only use the research group list available on EUTOPIA SIF website. However, all VUB research groups can be chosen as co-host. In case of difficulties, applicants may seek advice with the VUB Local Programme Manager (see Part 6).

You may in addition, use the optional pre-application stage to find a hosting group (see part 4.3).

At least one support letter from one hosting group will be required for an eligible application (see below). This means that at least one host research group has to be contacted by the applicant.

In case of multiple combination choices (up to 3 are possible), it will not be mandatory to contact the other research group you choose, but it is strongly encouraged when developing your research project, prior to submitting your application.

Please note that your research project will, among other criteria, be assessed for the “fit with host research groups of EUTOPIA” in the REVIEW ROUND (part 5.2).

Requesting a support letter

At least one **support letter from a prospective EUTOPIA host research group is requested** as part of the application file. The candidate will upload the support letter in pdf format on the submission platform as part of the compulsory application content.

The letter must be issued by the research group chosen as **first hosting option** (if only one support letter is uploaded by the candidate).

The letter, in free text, must clearly indicate the endorsement and feasibility of the project within the identified hosting research group.

The letter must be signed by the following persons depending on the university the letter is issued:

- CYU: The research group director
- UL: The prospective supervisor AND the dean of the faculty the research group is part of.
- GU: The research group leader
- UPF: The prospective supervisor or head of the research group
- VUB: The prospective supervisor
- UW: The prospective supervisor

In case of difficulties identifying the proper person authorized to sign, applicants may seek advice with the relevant Local Programme Manager (see Part 6).

4.5 Ethics

The EUTOPIA-SIF programme endorses the ethical principles of Horizon 2020 as outlined in Regulation (EU) No 1291/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing Horizon 2020. In particular, all activities shall comply with ethical principles including the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and must comply with relevant national, EU and international legislations.

Funding will not be granted for activities carried out outside of the EU if they are prohibited in all member states. Research activities will have an exclusive focus on civil applications and the following fields of research will not be financed:

- Research activity aiming at human cloning for reproductive purposes;
- Research activity intended to modify the genetic heritage of human beings which could make such changes heritable;
- Research activities intended to create human embryos solely for the purpose of research or for the purpose of stem cell procurement, including by means of somatic cell nuclear transfer.

Ethical issues will be addressed at different stages in the application and selection process:

- As part of the application submission documentation fellows are requested to fill out an Ethical declaration, *i.e.* a checklist provided for in the research proposal template, to identify ethical matters relating to their research proposal; eventual additional elements may be asked for by the EUTOPIA-SIF coordination team (more details in the research proposal template).
- All candidates invited for interview will be asked to reiterate the ethics implications of their proposed work as part of the interview assessment and their understanding of the ethical implications will be part of the assessment;

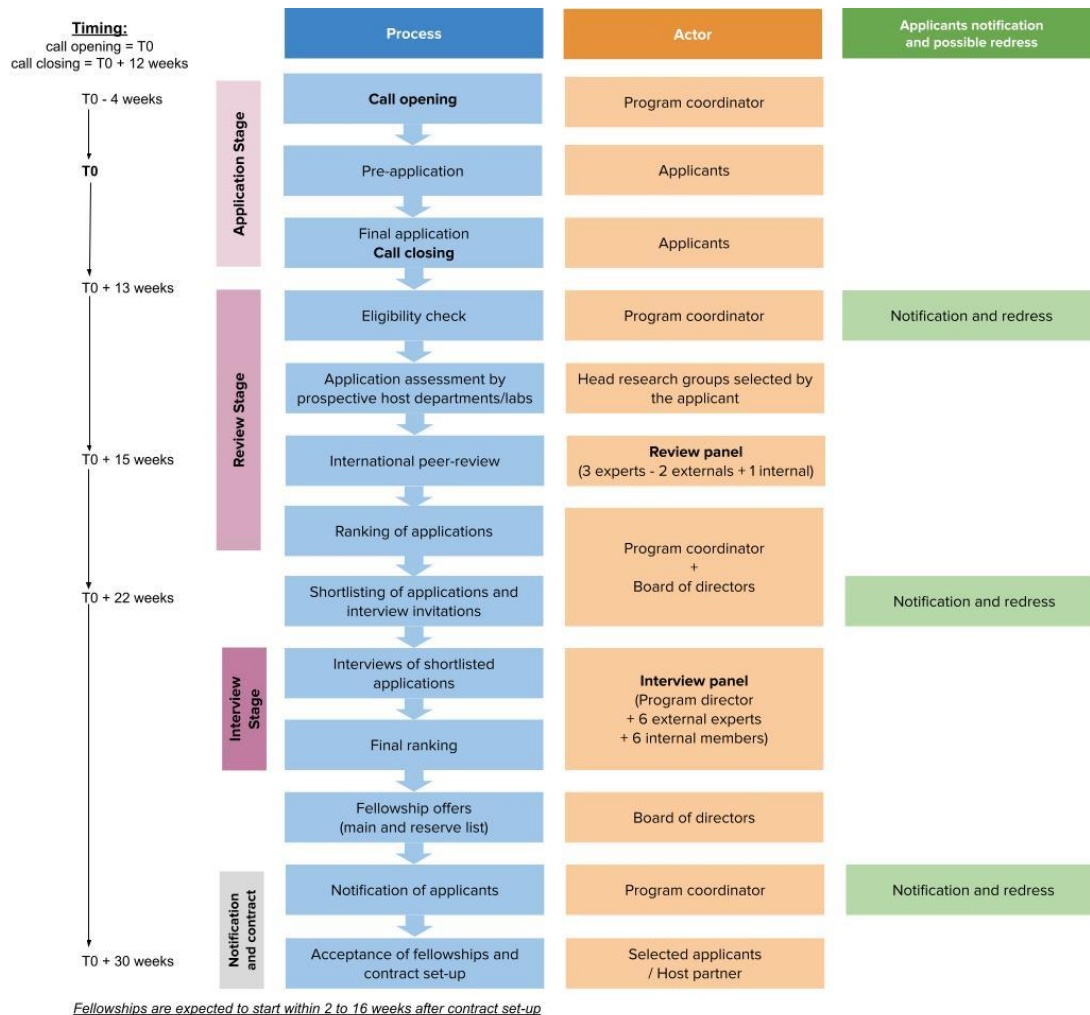
Successful candidates will follow up on the ethical issues with their host university via the procedures existing in each institution:

- Successful applicants will be required to review their initial ethics checklist with their academic supervisor within the first month of their fellowship start date. The supervisor will confirm whether ethical approval is required and validate the checklist, guiding the fellow through the appropriate ethical approval process by filling out a Research Ethics Application form;
- The Research Ethics Application form will be assessed by the relevant committee of each university focusing on scientific merit, competency, social value, risks & benefits, harm – the likelihood of occurrence and severity, informed consent, confidentiality, conflict of interest, honest reporting of results;
- Any project assessed to necessitate ethical approval, must be in receipt of ethical authorization before the corresponding element of the project may start.

5 Evaluation and selection procedure

5.1 Main steps of the procedure

The following figure shows the steps of the evaluation and selection process:



The main steps of the evaluation and selection process are:

1. At the closing of the call, applications undergo an eligibility check under the supervision of the Board of Directors (BoD), applying the above-mentioned requirements (application content, part 4.1 and 4.3). The Board of Directors is chaired by the EUTOPIA-SIF Programme Director and includes the Local Programme Directors appointed by each partner university;
2. Eligible applications are sent to heads of prospective research groups designated by each candidate upon application, who assess the relevance of the research project for the targeted group, based on the research proposal (no information about the candidate is given to the heads of research groups). This allows for feedback on the relevance of the proposal to the prospective hosts and ensures fairness and freedom of the applicants in the design of their proposal.

3. The Review Panel (RP) reviews applications in the review stage. Each proposal is assigned to three external reviewers, who evaluate the application based on material submitted by the applicant, reference letters and assessments of the research groups, using evaluation criteria presented below (part. 5.3). Reviewers are designated by the Board of Directors based on the research specialization of the applicant.
4. After the reviews are completed, applications are ranked on the basis of an average score being allocated to each application by the evaluations. The Board of Directors establishes the ranking and the list of applications selected for the interview stage, based on the rank order, among applications meeting the score threshold (table 5). The number of interviewed candidates is between 2.5 and 3 times the number of fellowships offered.
5. Short-listed candidates are invited for an online interview with the Interview Panel in the interview stage. The Interview Panel comprises the Programme Director, 6 external members and 6 internal members. Internal members include at least one expert of each KRA and one member of each university. The external members include at least one expert of each Key Research Area (KRA). This interview generates a second score based on the interview assessment criteria below (part 5.3).
6. A final rank order list is established on the basis of the interview scores, among applications meeting the score threshold (table 6). The board of directors validates the fellowship offers based on the final ranking. Best-ranked candidates are offered, by ranking order, their preferred choice of hosting institution, subject to hosting capacity in each institution. Because of capacity constraint, some candidates may be offered their second or third hosting option. A reserve list, by rank order, is also established to allow for additional offers in case of withdrawal
7. Formal fellowship offers are made to the successful candidates by each host institution.

Call timeline:	
Monday 20 September 2021	Publication of the second call for proposals
Monday 20 September 2021	Opening of optional the Pre-application stage
Monday, 20 September 2021	Opening of the submission platform
Monday, 25 October 2021	Pre-application dead-line
Monday, 10 January 2022	Deadline for submission of proposals
Thursday, 20 January 2022	Outcome of the eligibility check
Thursday, 4 February 2022	End feedback by heads of targeted research groups on the submitted projects
Monday, 7 February – Monday, 21 March 2022	REVIEW STAGE: Assessment by the Review Panel and ranking
Wednesday 30 March 2022	Shortlist for interviews
Monday 18 -26 April 2022. (TBC)	INTERVIEW STAGE: Interviews for short-listed candidates and ranking
By beginning of May 2022	Decision by the Board of Directors on fellowship offers
2nd week of May 2022	Notification of results to applicants
By end of May 2022	Contract set-up (after acceptance of fellowship offers)
September 2022	Start of the fellowship positions

5.2 Evaluation criteria and selection

In the Review and Interview stages, proposals will be evaluated according to the criteria indicated in the tables below. All items in the review and interview stage will be evaluated on the standard EC 0-5 scale. The overall score at each stage will be computed using weights indicated in tables below.

In the review stage, evaluation focuses on the quality of the proposed research, its suitability for EUTOPIA-SIF, the applicants' credentials (experience, potential to deliver original, independent work) and their career development project (including their ability to develop their profile in a context of an international and cross-sectoral leadership programme). The review stage score determines admission in the shortlist of candidates selected for interview. The threshold to be shortlisted is 3.00/5.00.

Table 5 – Evaluation criteria - review stage		
Overall threshold is 3.0		
Evaluation items	Weight	Criteria
Evaluation of the proposed research		
S&T Quality	25%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Scientific and technical merit ●Clarity of objectives ●Originality of proposed research and awareness of current debates and state-of-the-art
Feasibility and Suitability	15%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Comprehensive and appropriate theoretical and methodological framework ●Feasibility within given time-frame and available budget ●Relevance for the Key Research Areas ●Fit with host research groups of EUTOPIA ●Capacity to carry out the research project
Impact & dissemination	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Recognition of anticipated impact of work ●Evidence of long-term vision ●Publication, dissemination and exploitation plan
Evaluation of applicant's credentials		
Experience	15%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Qualifications ●Research track-record ●Training ●Awards & Funding ●Statements of recommendation
Evidence of Leadership	15%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Quality of publications ●Other outputs (e.g. patents) ●Diversity of dissemination activities including conference attendance, invited talks ●Previous/current partnerships and collaborations ●International experience at doctoral or postdoctoral level ●Research profile ●Engagement with cross-sectoral organizations/ community groups ●Ability to forge beyond disciplinary specialisms
Career development		
Added-value for the fellow	20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Relevance of fellowship at career stage ●Commitment to interdisciplinary research ●Scope for new partnerships and relevance of potential cross-sectoral collaboration ●Diversity of research agenda ●Profile development activity

Short-listed candidates in the review stage will be invited to present their research proposal in an online interview, including Q&A using a standardized format for all applicants. Application material and RP assessments will be provided to all Interview Panel members. The interview stage score determines the final ranking of candidates and their selection in the programme. The threshold score for selection into the programme is 3.50/5.00

Table 6 – Evaluation Criteria - interview stage		
Overall threshold is 3.5		
Evaluation items	Weight	Criteria
Research capability	35%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Technical capability ● Experience ● Scientific knowledge and disciplinary skills ● Understanding of ethical implications
Excellence of the research project	35%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Scientific vision ● Quality and novelty of the research project ● Coherence and effectiveness of the work plan
Leadership potential	30%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Career path vision ● Previous level of responsibility ● Entrepreneurial awareness ● Initiative and creativity (e.g. setting up networks, partnerships, seminar groups) ● Motivation ● Communication skills

In case of ex-aequo in the review or interview stages, the tie will be resolved in favour of equality of opportunity (disability status, gender) and diversity (geographic origin). The Board of Directors will examine cases where a single outlying score would exclude the applicant from further consideration and will request an additional review in such cases.

At the end of the procedure, candidates will receive a summary assessment indicating the strengths and weaknesses of their application.

Possibility for redress

Applicants can appeal against the decisions following the outcome of the eligibility, short-listing and interview stages, based on administrative or procedural arguments only. Upon request, the final consensus report of the Interview Panel will be sent to the applicant. Candidates will have the right to submit a request for redress. A Committee comprising the BoD and the IP will examine all matters of redress. The EUTOPIA-SIF Programme Director will communicate the outcome.

Candidates will have the right to submit a request for redress to: eutopia-sif@cyu.fr

6 Contact

Questions about the programme can be sent to the following contacts:

EUTOPIA-SIF Programme Management Team:

For general enquiries concerning the call (Eligibility, deadlines, access to the submission platform, submission material, etc.).

Email: eutopia-sif@cyu.fr

The local programme managers:

For specific questions regarding each university (allowances, research groups, etc.)

Local Programme Managers		
CYU	Karine Gambier-Leroy	karine.gambier-leroy@cyu.fr
GU	Henrik Lindskog	henrik.lindskog@gu.se
UL	Polona Juvancic	polona.juvancic@uni-lj.si
UPF	Maria Gil	maria.gil@upf.edu
VUB	Cristina Macovei	cristina.macovei@vub.be
UW	John Burden	j.p.burden@warwick.ac.uk

NB: The coordination team will be on winter vacation between 23 December 2021 to January 3rd 2022. Questions sent during this period will be answered from January 3rd 2022.

7 Annex 1-Eligibility check list

Applicants may use the following check list before submitting their application.

Diploma	<p>Copy of PhD certificate in English (accompanied with a non-certified English translation if the initial document is not in English) OR a provisional PhD certificate — certificate on headed paper from their supervisor/academic institution attesting that they will complete their PhD viva by the due date, OR mandatory template detailing 4 years of full-time equivalent research experience. Completion of PhD or equivalent experience by 15 April 2022</p>	
Key research area	At least one Key Research topic selected on the EUTOPIA SIF platform	
MSCA mobility rule	<p>MSCA mobility rule (for at least one hosting choice, you may not have spent more than 12 months in the Host university country during the last 3 years prior to employment. Please check from 1st Sept 2019 to 31 August 2022).</p> <p>Be sure that the EUTOPIA SIF coordination will be able to check correctly with the information you deliver on the online form.</p>	
Application	<p>Application to be submitted online Application to be submitted in English. I checked all the documents are readable after transforming them in pdf format.</p>	
Project	<p>Project template used without any changes to layout and conforming strictly with the specifications. Use of all the Project template section, for the intended purpose, following the length specifications.</p>	
Ethics	Ethics self-declaration in the project template filled and confirmed (tick the confirmation box).	
CV	CV in pdf, using the mandatory template	
Support letter	<p>Support letter from at least 1 host research group. The letter is issued by the applicant first choice of HOST research group selected on the application platform. Name, surname, email, research group, and university affiliation of the head of the Research group, filled + letter in pdf format uploaded on the EUTOPIA SIF platform. The letter is signed by the authorized person as detailed in Part 4.4.</p>	
Reference letters	Two reference letters are requested by the applicant on the submission platform before submission.	
Personal statement	No template, max 2 pages in pdf format.	
Hosting choices	At least 1 combination of host & co-host and up to 3.	