Research Executive Agency

THE 2012 PEOPLE PROGRAMME

GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS

Marie Curie Actions
(Common Part)

This document contains information common to the Marie Curie Actions.
It is to be read in conjunction with the Guides for Applicants, Ethics and Call-Specific Parts

MARIE CURIE ACTIONS

Please note

The 2012 Marie Curie Actions are:

FP7-PEOPLE-2012-**CIG**
FP7-PEOPLE-2012-**COFUND**
FP7-PEOPLE-2012-**IAPP**
FP7-PEOPLE-2012-**IEF**
FP7-PEOPLE-2012-**IIF**
FP7-PEOPLE-2012-**IOF**
FP7-PEOPLE-2012-**IRSES**
FP7-PEOPLE-2012-**ITN**

Guides for Applicants for any other action in the PEOPLE programme, or indeed in any FP7 programme, can be found by following the links at
http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal

This Guide is based on the rules and conditions contained in the legal documents relating to FP7 (in particular the Seventh Framework Programme, Specific Programmes, Rules for Participation, and the Work Programmes), all of which can be consulted via the Participant Portal.

This Guide does not in itself have any legal value, and thus does not supersede those documents.

1. Introduction

Funding decisions in the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) are made on the basis of **calls** published by the Commission or its agencies, which solicit **proposals**. The proposals must be submitted using a special web-based service before a strictly enforced **deadline**. The Research Executive Agency (REA) evaluates all eligible proposals in order to identify those whose quality is sufficiently high for possible funding. The basis for this **evaluation** is a peer review carried out by independent experts.

The REA then **negotiates** with some or all of those whose proposals have successfully passed the evaluation stage, depending on the budget available. If negotiations are successfully concluded, **grant agreements** providing for an EU financial contribution are established with the beneficiaries.

This **Guide for Applicants** contains the essential information to guide applicants through the mechanics of preparing and submitting a proposal. It contains information that is common to all of the Marie Curie Actions, and must be read in conjunction with the Call-Specific Guides and the Ethics Guide.

Applicants must also refer to the **People Work Programme 2012.** This includes a detailed description of the Marie Curie Actions, their objectives and scope, the eligibility criteria, the European Union contribution and the evaluation criteria. Work Programmes are revised each year, so it is important to refer to the latest version before preparing a proposal.

This Guide and the Work Programme are essential reading. In addition, applicants may wish to consult other reference and background documents, in particular those relating to negotiation and the grant agreements, which are available on the Participant Portal:
http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal

2. How to apply

Turning your idea into an effective proposal

The coordinator

The REA refers to the participant who is taking the lead in the preparation of the proposal as the "proposal coordinator". The coordinator acts as the single point of contact between the participants and the REA. For Intra-European Fellowships (IEF), International Outgoing Fellowships (IOF), International Incoming Fellowships (IIF) and Career Integration Grants (CIG) the experienced researcher can act as the proposal coordinator before the call deadline, in particular in order to submit the proposal. However after the call deadline the scientist in charge at the host organization will be the single contact point. The experienced researcher and the scientist in charge **cannot be the same person.** Please note that the Acknowledgement of Receipt of the proposal, which is sent after the call deadline, will be sent to the coordinator. Further, the evaluation results will be sent to the coordinator.

Focusing your planned work

Refer to the description of the Marie Curie Action in the Call-Specific Guide and the Work Programme to check the **eligibility criteria** and any other special conditions that apply. Refer also to the **evaluation criteria** against which your proposal will be assessed. These are given in the Work Programme and the Call-Specific Guide. The independent experts are instructed that proposals submitted must be evaluated exclusively against the published criteria.

National Contact Points

A network of National Contact Points (NCPs) has been established to provide advice and support to organisations which are preparing proposals. You are highly recommended to get in touch with your NCP at an early stage. (Contact details are given on CORDIS http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/get-support_en.html .)

Please note that, after the applicants have been informed, the Commission will also give the NCPs statistics and information on the outcome of the call and of the evaluation for each proposal. This information is supplied to support the NCPs in their service role, and is given under strict conditions of confidentiality.

Other sources of help

The Call-Specific Guides give references to further sources of help for this call. In particular:

- The Commission's general **enquiry service** on any aspect of FP7. Questions can be sent to a single email address and will be directed to the most appropriate department for reply. Please see http://ec.europa.eu/research/enquiries

- A dedicated help desk has been set up to deal with technical questions related to the **Electronic Proposal Submission Service** (EPSS). See below

- The **European Charter for Researchers** and the **Code of Conduct** for their recruitment can be downloaded from http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/rights

- A help desk providing assistance on intellectual property matters (see CORDIS under http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/how_en.html#ipr)

- Any other guidance documents or background information related specifically to this call

- The date and contact address for any '**information day'** that the REA may be organising for this call.

Other services, including partner search facilities, provided via the CORDIS web site (see http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/partners_en.html).

Ethics principles

Please remember that research activities in FP7 should respect fundamental ethics principles, including those reflected in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union[1]. These principles include the need to ensure the freedom of research and the need to protect the physical and moral integrity of individuals and the welfare of animals. For this reason, the REA and the European Commission carry out an ethics review on research proposals when appropriate.

The following fields of research will not be financed under this Framework Programme:

> - *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[2]*
> - *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.*

For human embryonic stem cell research, European Union financial support for research activities involving destroying human embryos is excluded, including for the procurement of stem

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[1] Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, 2000/C 364/01. See also http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/default_en.htm
[2] Research relating to cancer treatment of the gonads can be financed.

cells. The exclusion of funding of this step of research will not prevent the European Union funding of subsequent steps involving human embryonic stem cells.

More comprehensive details can be found in the Guide for Applicants (Ethics). This guide must be read by all applicants, even if they believe that no ethics concerns arise in their proposal; failure to complete the Ethics section of the proposal can lead to the proposal being declared ineligible.

Presenting your proposal

A proposal has two parts:

Part A consists of several administrative forms which contain information about the proposal and the applicant. The information requested includes a summary of the proposed project, contact details of the *host organisation* and the *researcher*, and information related to the funding requested (please see the Call-Specific Guide). This information will be encoded in a structured database for further processing to produce, for example, statistics, and evaluation reports. This information will also be used by the experts and the *REA* staff during the evaluation process.

The information in **Part A** is entered through a set of online forms.

Part B is a "template", or list of headings, rather than an administrative form (please see the Call-Specific Guide). Applicants should follow this structure strictly when presenting the scientific and technical content of their proposal. The template is designed to highlight those aspects that will be assessed against the **evaluation criteria**. It covers, among other things, the nature of the proposed work, the participants and their roles in the project proposed, and the impacts that might be expected to arise from the proposed work.
The information given will be the basis on which the experts will evaluate the proposal, so ensure that it is precise and complete. References to web pages will not be taken into account as part of the proposal during evaluation, unless specified in the Call-Specific Guide.

Part B of the proposal is uploaded by the applicant in the EPSS system described below.

> *A __maximum length__ may be specified for the different sections of Part B, or for Part B as a whole (see the Call-Specific Guide). Applicants __must__ keep their proposal within these limits. Experts will be instructed to disregard any excess pages.*

Proposal language

The working language of the expert evaluators is English and it is recommended that proposals are prepared in English. However, proposals may be prepared in any official language of the European Union. If your proposal is not in English, a translation of the full proposal would be of assistance to the experts.

3. Proposal submission

About the EPSS

Proposals must be submitted electronically using the REA's **Electronic Proposal Submission Service** (**EPSS**). Proposals arriving by any other means are regarded as 'not submitted', and will not be evaluated[3]. All the data that you upload is securely stored on a server to which only you

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[3]   In exceptional cases, when a proposal coordinator has absolutely no means of accessing the EPSS, and when it is impossible to arrange for another person, an applicant may request permission from the REA to submit on paper. A request should be sent via the FP7 enquiry service (see the Call-Specific Guide), indicating in the subject line

and the other participants in the proposal have access until the deadline. This data is encrypted until the close of the call. Please note that this also means that the REA does not have access to the proposal data (except that entered in the EPSS registration form) until after the call deadline.

You can access the EPSS from the call page https://www.epss-fp7.org/epss.

Full instructions are found in the "EPSS preparation and submission guide", available from the EPSS entry page (click on "EPSS user guide").

The most important points are explained below.

Use of the EPSS system by the proposal coordinator

The EPSS refers to the participant who is taking the lead in the preparation of the proposal as the "proposal coordinator" Only one login and password is provided which must then be shared as appropriate.

As coordinator you can:
- register an interest in submitting a proposal to a particular call
- complete **Part A** of the proposal
- download the document template for writing **Part B** of the proposal, and when it is completed, upload the finished **Part B**
- submit the complete proposal **Part A** and **Part B**
- nominate referees.

Participant Identification Codes (PICs)

Participants possessing a Participant Identification Code (PIC) can use this number to identify themselves in the EPSS. On entering the PIC, parts of the A forms will be filled in automatically. Please note that in the cases where a PIC is not available it will always be possible to submit a proposal by entering the organisation details manually. However, the use of PICs will lead to more efficient handling of the proposal. The process for assigning a PIC is triggered by a self-registration of an organisation at the Unique Registration Facility website: http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/urf. On the following website you will find a search tool for checking if your organisation is already registered http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/page/searchorganisations.

Referees' assessments

For individual actions (IEF, IOF, IIF, CIG), up to three referees can be nominated in order to provide assessments of the *experienced researcher*. A special facility within the EPSS system permits referees to create their assessment for the proposal. The creation of the referee happens from the "Set Up Proposal" page. Once the proposal coordinator has nominated a referee the EPSS system will automatically send a login and password to the referee's email address. Due to potential problems with SPAM filters, however, when a mail is sent to the referee, an instruction mail is also sent to the person who has registered, requesting the applicant to cross-check with the referee if he or she has received the email from the EPSS system.

"Paper submission request". (You can call the enquiry service if the web access is not possible: +800 6 7 8 9 10 11 from inside Europe; or +32 2 299 96 96 from the rest of the world. A postal or email address will then be given to you). Such a request, which must clearly explain the circumstances of the case, must be received by the REA no later than one month before the call deadline. The REA will reply within five working days of receipt. If derogation is granted, a proposal on paper may be submitted by mail, courier or hand delivery. The delivery address will be given in the derogation letter.

When the nominated referee uploads a referee's assessment the proposal coordinator will receive an email to confirm that an assessment has been uploaded but the assessment itself will not be visible to the coordinator. The referees' assessments are automatically added to the proposal package by the EPSS system but will only become accessible to the REA when (if) the proposal is submitted. Referees' assessments can be submitted any time between the issue of a password and login for the referee and the call closure (even before the main proposal is submitted). **Referees' assessments cannot be submitted after the call closure.**

Please note that if you nominate referees close to the call deadline then this leaves them very little time to submit their assessments.

Submitting the proposal

Only the coordinator is authorised to submit the proposal.

Completing the **Part A** forms in the EPSS system and uploading a **Part B** does not mean that your proposal is submitted. Once there is a consolidated version of the proposal, the coordinator must press the button "**SUBMIT NOW**".

(If you don't see the button "SUBMIT NOW", first select the "SUBMIT" tag at the top of the screen).

> *Please note that "SUBMIT NOW" starts the final steps for submission; it does not in itself cause the proposal to be submitted.*

After reading the information page that then appears, it is possible to submit the proposal using the button marked **"PRESS THIS BUTTON TO SUBMIT THE PROPOSAL".**

The EPSS then performs an automatic validation of the proposal. A list of any problems such as missing data, viruses, wrong file format or excessive file size will then appear on the screen. **Submission is blocked until these problems are corrected.** Once corrected, the coordinator must then repeat the above steps to submit. **Please note that if a proposal is validated it does not imply that it is eligible or that the page limits have been respected.** It is also the case that not all eligibility conditions are checked at validation, for example any restriction on the minimum number of participants is checked manually by the REA.

If successfully submitted, the coordinator receives a message that indicates the proposal has been received. This automatic message is *not* the official acknowledgement of receipt which is sent after the call deadline has passed.

Please note that in very rare cases there have been problems with uploaded files mainly due to errors in the conversion to PDF format before uploading. **Applicants are thus strongly advised to verify, by downloading the file from the EPSS server before the call deadline, that the part B of the proposal they uploaded is the right file, that it has not been corrupted, is complete, printable and readable.**

The coordinator may continue to modify the proposal and submit revised versions, overwriting the previous one, until the deadline. *Please note that the sequence above must be repeated each time.* If the submission sequence described above is not followed, the REA considers that *no proposal has been submitted*.

As each successive submission overwrites the previous version, it is a good idea to **submit a draft well before the deadline**.

For the proposal Part B you must use exclusively PDF ("portable document format", compatible with Adobe version 3 or higher, with embedded fonts). Irrespective of any page limits specified in the Call-Specific Guide, there is an overall limit of 10MB to the size of proposal file Part B. There

are also restrictions to the name you give to the Part B file. You should only use alphanumeric characters. Special characters and spaces must be avoided.

> *Applicants are advised to clean their document before converting to PDF (e.g. accept any track changes). Check that your conversion software successfully converts all pages of the original document (e.g. there is no problem with page limits or margins).*

> *Please note that the REA prints proposals on plain A4 paper. The printable zone on the print engine is bounded by 1.5 cm right, left, top and bottom. No scaling is applied to make the page "fit" the window. Printing is done at 300 dots per inch.*

About the deadline

Proposals must be submitted on or before the deadline specified in the Call fiche.

The EPSS will be closed for the call at the call deadline. After this moment, access to the EPSS for this call will be impossible. Do not wait until the last moment before submitting your proposal.

> ### Call deadlines are absolutely final and are strictly enforced

> *Leaving your first submission attempt to the last few minutes of the call will give you no time to overcome even the smallest technical difficulties, proposal verification problems or communications delays which may arise. Such events are never accepted as extenuating circumstances; your proposal will be regarded as not having been submitted.*

> *Submission is deemed to occur at the moment when the proposal coordinator <u>completes</u> the submission sequence described above. <u>It is not the point at which you start the upload</u>. If you wait until too near to the close of the call to start uploading your proposal, there is a serious risk that you will not be able to submit in time.*

> *If you have registered and submitted your proposal in error to another call which closes after this call, the REA will not be aware of it until it is discovered among the downloaded proposals for the later call. It will therefore be classified as ineligible because of late arrival.*

> *The submission of a proposal requires some knowledge of the EPSS system, a detailed knowledge of the contents of the proposal and the authority to make last-minute decisions if problems arise. **Applicants are advised not to delegate the job of submitting their proposal.***

In the unlikely event of a failure of the EPSS service due to breakdown of the server during the last 24 hours of a call, the deadline will be extended by a further 24 hours. This will be notified by email to all proposal coordinators who had registered for this call by the time of the original deadline, and also by a notice on the Call page on the Participant Portal (see http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/page/searchorganisations)

Such a failure is an exceptional event, therefore do not assume that there will be an extension to the Call. If you have difficulty in submitting your proposal, you should not assume that it is because of a problem with the server, since this is rarely the case. Contact the EPSS help desk if in doubt.

Please note that the REA will not extend deadlines for system failures that are not its own responsibility. In all circumstances, applicants should aim to submit their proposal well before the deadline to have time to solve any problems.

Correcting or revising your proposal

Errors discovered by the applicant in proposals submitted to the EPSS can be rectified by simply submitting a corrected version. As long as the Call has not yet closed, the new submission will overwrite the old one.

Once the deadline has passed, however, the REA can accept no further additions, corrections or resubmissions. The last version of your proposal received before the deadline is the one which will be evaluated, and no later material can be submitted.

Ancillary material

Only a single PDF file comprising the complete **Part B** can be uploaded. Unless specified in the call, any hyperlinks to other documents, embedded material, and any other documents (company brochures, supporting documentation, reports, audio, video, multimedia etc.) sent electronically or by post, will be disregarded.

Withdrawing a proposal

Before the deadline, applicants may withdraw a proposal by submitting a revised version with an empty **Part B** section, with the following words entered in the abstract field of **Part A**:

> ***"The applicants wish to withdraw this proposal. It should not be evaluated by the REA".***

After the deadline, applicants may send an email to EPSS Helpdesk: support@epss-fp7.org.

Multiple Submissions

*Applicants are reminded that only **one** proposal may be submitted in an evaluation procedure **at any one time** for any of the following actions:*

- Marie Curie Intra-European Fellowships for Career Development (IEF),

- Marie Curie International Outgoing Fellowships for Career Development (IOF),

- Marie Curie International Incoming Fellowships (IIF).

> ***Please note that the Research Executive Agency will not conclude more than one grant agreement for the same project.***

In case of multiple submissions by a research or research funding organisation, the applicant entity may be asked to demonstrate the capacity to participate in more than one of those projects simultaneously, in terms of research staff, infrastructure and management.

4. Countries that can participate in, or be funded by the PEOPLE programme

Please be aware that the information in this section cannot be regarded as definitive, and participants should refer to the CORDIS website before making an application http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/who_en.html.

In general all EU member states and countries associated to the 7th Framework Programme can participate in all calls, although in some calls other countries must be included in order to form an eligible consortium.

The European Union Member States are:
Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom.

The Associated countries are[4]:
Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Faroe Islands, FYR Macedonia, Iceland, Israel, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkey.

Other countries may become associated during the course of FP7. The latest news will be posted on the CORDIS web site: http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/who_en.html.

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4 Please consult list at http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/who_en.html

Preparing your proposal

- **Are you applying for the correct action?** Check that your proposed work falls within the scope of this call, and that you have applied for the correct action (see the "PEOPLE" *Work Programme*).
- **Is your proposal eligible?** The eligibility criteria are given in the *Work Programme*. For detailed information, please refer to the Call-Specific Guide. Any proposal not meeting the eligibility requirements will be considered ineligible and will not be evaluated.
- **Is your proposal complete?** Proposals must comprise a **Part A**, containing the *administrative information*; and a **Part B** containing the *description* of your proposal as described in the Call-Specific Guide. A proposal that does not contain both parts will be considered ineligible and will not be evaluated.
- **If the call allows referees' assessments and you intend to use them** to support your application, have you defined the referees well in advance so that they can submit their recommendation letter before the deadline?
- **Does your proposed work raise ethics issues?** Clearly indicate any potential ethics, safety or regulatory aspects of the proposed research and the way they will be dealt with in your proposed project. An ethics check will take place during the evaluation and an ethics review will take place for proposals dealing with sensitive issues. Proposals may be rejected on ethics grounds if such issues are not dealt with satisfactorily.
- **Does your proposal follow the required structure?** Proposals should be precise and concise, and must follow the proposal structure described in the Call-Specific Guide, which is designed to correspond to the evaluation criteria which will be applied. This structure varies for different calls. Omitting requested information will almost certainly lead to lower scores and possible rejection.
- **Have you maximised your chances?** Please be aware that there will be strong competition. Therefore, edit your proposal carefully, strengthen or eliminate weak points. Put yourself in the place of an expert evaluator; please refer to the evaluation criteria given in the Call-Specific Guide. Arrange for your draft to be evaluated by experienced colleagues, use their advice to improve it before submission.
- **Do you need further advice and support?** You are strongly advised to inform your National Contact Point of your intention to submit a proposal (please see the Call-Specific Guide). Remember the Enquiry service listed in the Call-Specific Guide.

Final checks before submission

- If you are submitting for a Marie Curie Intra European, International Outgoing or International Incoming Fellowship or for a Marie Curie Career Integration Grant, please be certain that this is agreed upon by the respective host organisation
- **Check once more the eligibility criteria described in the call.** Remember – the information given in part A is considered definitive and eligibility decisions will be based on it. Please ensure that the information in part A does not contradict that in part B.
- **Is your Part B in portable document format (PDF),** including no material in other formats?
- **Is the filename made up of the letters A to Z, and numbers 0 to 9?** You should avoid special characters and spaces.
- **Have you printed out your Part B PDF file**, to check that it really is the file you intend to submit, and that it is complete, printable and readable? Proposals that cannot be printed will not be evaluated. After the call deadline it will not be possible to replace your **Part B** file.
- **Double check that you respect the minimum font size and the page limitations for the different sections (if any) given in the Call-Specific Guide.**
- **Is your Part B (PDF file) within the size limit of 10 MB?**
- **Have you virus-checked your computer?** The EPSS will automatically block the submission of any file containing a virus.

Check List

The deadline: very important!
- **Have you taken the responsibility to submit your proposal?**
- **Have you made yourself familiar with the EPSS in good time?**
- **Have you allowed time to submit a first version of your proposal well in advance of the deadline** (at least several days before), and then to continue to improve it with regular resubmissions?
- **Have you completed the submission process for your latest version?**

Following submission
- Information submitted to the EPSS remains encrypted until the deadline and can only be viewed by the applicant;
- **It is strongly recommended that you check that all your material has been successfully uploaded and submitted, that you have submitted the correct Part B file and that it is readable and printable, by downloading and printing it**;
- You can revise and resubmit your proposal up to the call deadline.