



Excellent research training for Scientists for the Future

Guide for Applicants

March 2023

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1. SCIENTISTS4FUTURE SLOVENIA PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

About the Scientists4Future Slovenia doctoral programme

Scientists4Future Slovenia Fellowship Programme, recipient of Seal of Excellence for HORIZON MSCA, will recruit, host and train 25 doctoral candidates who will study 4 years, in line with the Slovenian higher education programme. The overarching goal is to provide an inspiring and productive environment and comprehensive support to attract, develop, and globally interconnect researchers, allowing them to develop the necessary skill set required to tackle today's challenges. Each doctoral candidate will register in the Doctoral School of the implementing partner – University of Ljubljana. Scientists4Future will run for 60 months and will have a single doctoral cycle of 48 months.

Mobility is a key asset and feature of the Scientists4Future Slovenia doctoral programme with exchanges and visits planned for all doctoral candidates at partner laboratories and industrial premises. The secondments will last up to six months with a **minimum of one international/intersectoral secondment per doctoral candidate**. The secondment(s) will be **clearly outlined** in the research project summary made prior to the start of the fellowship. National Institute of Chemistry (NIC) with partner organisations from various European countries will within the Scientists4Future Slovenia programme enhanced quality and sustainability of research training and will increase global attractiveness, visibility and reputation of the doctoral candidates and participating organisations.

Eligibility criteria. Who can apply?

In order to be eligible, applicants of any nationality are required to **meet the following criteria by the date of the call deadline (15th May 2023)**:

- ✓ **Mobility requirements:** Following the MSCA mobility rule-incoming candidates must not have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in the country of the selected primary host institution for more than 12 months in the last 3 years before the call deadline.

Exceptions for mobility rule: Compulsory national service, short stays such as holidays and time spent as part of a procedure for obtaining refugee status under the Geneva Convention.

- **Second cycle study programme degree:** Researchers must be doctoral candidates, i.e. not already in possession of a doctoral degree. Researchers who have successfully defended their doctoral thesis but who have not yet formally been awarded the doctoral degree will NOT be considered eligible. Candidates must have Second cycle study programme degree - Study programmes providing education for occupations regulated by Directives of the European Union, evaluated with at least 300 ECTS, or Completed study programme from other domestic or foreign universities, according to the requirements which apply to students studying in Slovenia. The equivalence of previously obtained education abroad must be officially recognized according to the provisions of Art. 121 of the Statute of the University of Ljubljana. The second study cycle has to be finished not more than four years before the date of application, with exceptions for career breaks and researchers at risk. The academic qualification must be obtained **by and no later than 30 September 2023**.

Particular attention will be paid to applicants with special needs, such as persons with disabilities and researchers at risk.

- ❖ Applicants are free to choose one topic out of **25 innovative research topics** offered.
- ❖ The call is open to researchers of **any nationality**.
- ❖ **Application must be submitted in English.**
- ❖ **Only one application per candidate** is acceptable.
- ❖ Applicant must **submit the application with all required support documents** before the deadline, using **the application platform**.

Which research topics are supported?

The scientific framework offered by Scientists4Future Slovenia is structured along six thematic challenges, incorporating the research priorities at the NIC. Research programme will offer free and open research options to doctoral candidates in six thematic areas: **Health, Energy, Responsible processes, Advanced products, Chemical engineering and Computer modelling**. These areas of NIC, Slovenia are ranked by national and international evaluators as leading in excellence in science.

The topic of each thematic area will combine several different knowledge bases. The interdisciplinarity will mostly be established by including computer modelling and chemical engineering into areas of Health, Energy, Development of advanced products and Responsible processes. **Health** thematic area combines synthetic biology, nanobiotechnology, immunology and biophysics and cell biology. **Energy** thematic area is interdisciplinary linked to computer modelling, chemical characterisation methods, physics and material science. **Responsible processes** combine inorganic and organic chemistry with advanced characterisation methods arriving from physics, pure chemistry and chemical technology. **Advanced products** enable interdisciplinary research by combining various synthesis and characterisation approaches and a variety of final applications from sensors, nanoporous materials and bioderived monomers.

Working and employment conditions

The recruitment programme does not discriminate against applicants on the basis of gender, age, ethnicity, national or social origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation, language, disability, political opinion and social or economic condition. Researchers with disabilities are supported and an MSCA Special Needs Allowance will be applied for to cover any additional costs that researchers with disabilities face due to the increased costs of their mobility.

Each doctoral candidate will be employed by NIC for a full-time position under employment contract for duration of four years.

The salary will include prescribed social security coverage, health insurance coverage and social benefits such as maternity leave. **Net salary**, including regular bonus for travel expenses from home to work, holiday pay, meals will be **1,400 EUR**.

All research costs are covered.

For eligible candidates, there are additional allowances available:

Family allowance is applicable if the recruited doctoral candidate has or acquires family obligations during the action duration, i.e. persons linked to him/her by (i) marriage, or (ii) a relationship with equivalent status to a marriage recognized by the legislation of the country or region where this relationship was formalized; or (iii) dependent children who are actually being maintained by the researcher.

Long-term leave allowance (if applicable): contributes to the personnel costs incurred by the beneficiaries in case of the researchers' leave, including maternity, paternity, parental, sick or special leave, longer than 30 consecutive days, according to the Employment Relationships Act (ZDR-1) of Slovenia.

Special needs allowance (if applicable): contributes to the additional costs for the acquisition of special needs items and services for researchers with disabilities, whose long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments are certified by a competent national authority, and of such nature that their participation in the action may not be possible without them (e.g. assistance by third persons, adaptation of work environment, additional travel/transportation costs). These special needs items or services must not have been funded from another source (e.g. social security or health insurance). Both long-term leave and special needs allowances should be requested when the need arises.

Part-time: Researchers may, in agreement with the supervisor and beneficiary and with prior approval by the granting authority, implement their project on a part-time basis. Such a request is limited to personal or family reasons. In cases of part-time work, the doctoral candidates must work at least 50% of the full working time in their recruiting organization.

Training, supervision and career guidance

Tailored training and personalized mentoring: doctoral candidates will define and follow a Personal Career Development Plan at the beginning of their Doctoral thesis which will be updated each 18 months. Doctoral candidates will also benefit from support in the administrative procedures and several activities to promote integration in the local student life and cultural activities. Slovene language courses will be covered by the programme.

Supervising strategy will be also respected within Scientists4Future Slovenia programme. It includes high ethical standards of NIC, legal aspects between NIC and doctoral candidates and transferrable skills training. However Scientists4Future Slovenia Programme will go beyond existing practices of NIC by including international secondments and intersectoral training in the programme.

Individual practical research work in host laboratories is carried out through the implementation of a forefront research and technology programme, completed by shared training through international, intersectoral and interdisciplinary secondments. In addition, local/ national training modules will be offered to the doctoral candidates as well as network-wide joint training events constructed specifically such as hands-on and Summer/Winter schools, workshops, and transferable skills events all along the doctoral candidates' path.

Innovative Scientists4Future Slovenia training programme, is divided in two domains: A. *Scientific and Technical Knowledge and Skills* implemented through 4 overall study tracks to match to the doctoral candidates' own research project and a common set of B. *Transferable skills* with 4 sub-domains. The

programme includes an innovative and extensive training offer with 50 hours of mandatory transferable skills training.

Fellows' obligations on open access

Following the Horizon Europe rules fellows must guarantee open access to scientific publication and information on funding precisely:

Open access to scientific publications. The fellow must ensure open access (free of charge online access for any user) to all peer reviewed scientific publications relating to their results. In particular, they must as soon as possible and at the latest on publication, deposit a machine-readable electronic copy of the published version or final peer-reviewed manuscript accepted for publication in a repository for scientific publications.

Information on funding. Any dissemination of results (in any form, including electronic) must display the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation emblem and include the following text: "The Scientists4Future Slovenia has received funding from the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation".

2. HOW TO APPLY

All applicants must register in the Programme website through Application platform and download the **CV and declaration templates**. Once they are registered and have completed the templates, they must fill in an online Application Form and upload the files that will be evaluated.

How to submit a proposal?

The selection is organized in a single phase and all documents have to be uploaded via the dedicated webpage www.ki.si/

a) Documents to be filled online:

- ✓ Selection of the PhD Course
- ✓ Selection of Research topic
- ✓ Personal and Contact Data
- ✓ Qualifications
- ✓ Compliance with mobility rule

b) Documents to be submitted with the application form:

Please provide the following annexes:

- ✓ **Copy of a valid ID Document** (national ID card or passport; if the document is not in English, you should upload an official translation thereof) (pdf)
- ✓ **Detailed Curriculum Vitae**, max. 2 pages: it is mandatory to use the template available on the web page (Template CV.doc)
- ✓ **Motivation letter** and plans for envisioned professional orientation, max. 1 page (pdf)
- ✓ **Two recommendation letters** (pdf)
- ✓ **Copy of Academic Bachelor's and Master's diplomas** (pdf)

- ✓ **English proficiency test results:** TOEIC > 800 or TOEFL > 79 or CEFR > C1 or IELTS > 6.5 or equivalent (for those students who graduated in an English-speaking country) (pdf)
- ✓ **Signed Declaration:** use the template available on the web page (Template Declaration.doc)

3. TIMETABLE OF THE CALL

Timetable

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| 30 March 2023 | Call opening |
| 1 April 2023 | Application submission starts |
| 15 May 2023 | Call deadline |
| June 2023 | Phase 1-Eligibility and admissibility check |
| | Evaluation of application documents |
| | Phase 2- The interview of candidates |
| | Phase 3- Ranking list |
| July 2023 | Phase 4- Appointment of doctoral candidates |
| | Reserve list |
| September 2023 → | Redress procedure |
| | Onboarding of doctoral candidates/moving to Slovenia |

Composition of the committees

All committees involved in the evaluation and selection process are appointed by the **Programme Manager (PM)** and **Management Team (MT)**, with the approval of the **External Advisory Board**.

- (1) Programme Manager (PM) and Management Team (MT) will check eligibility of the applicants.
- (2) PM and MT organizes the evaluation and interview phases and takes care of **Evaluation and selection committee (ESC) members** appointment.

Evaluation and Selection committee (ESC) is composed of external and internal evaluators. They will evaluate CV and motivation letter and provide an evaluation report for each assessed applicant. They will also provide a first ranking list, i.e. those invited to the interview stage and those not.

- (3) **Interview panel (IP):** is organized at call and is composed by four members: (one being the main PI of the chosen topic, and one member of the MT).

- (4) **Final ranking list, including reserve list:** done by the ESC. Reserve list will consist of five doctoral candidates for the Call. **Doctoral candidates will have one week to reply to the selection decision. If no confirmation by the candidate is received within one week after the notification, it is considered that the candidate refused the funding.**

- (5) **Board of Partners (BoP),** consists of one representative from NIC, one representative from UNI LJ, and one doctoral student representative and is in charge of redress procedure.

4. SELECTION PROCEDURE AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

Selection procedure

Phase 1- Review of applications

(1) Call closing and eligibility check: Applications undergo an eligibility check by the PM and MT under the supervision of the External Advisory Board (EAB).

- ✓ Notification on eligibility check to non-eligible candidates after the call deadline.

(2) Application assessment by the host departments: Eligible applications are assessed by the host departments for the relevance of the research project for targeted group.

(3) Evaluation process: Peer reviews are implemented with the ESC. Each application is assigned to internal and external evaluators, who evaluate the project, based on the documentation submitted by the applicant. After this stage the PC/MT compiles and validates evaluation forms received from the ESC, under the supervision of the EAB. A rank order list is generated with the evaluation results.

- ✓ Short report with final score, ranking and feedback summary from the evaluators will be send to all eligible applicants by e-mail, after the evaluation. **Threshold of 70% (score 7/10) must be obtained to proceed to the interview phase.**

Phase 2- The Interview

(4) Interview process: An online interview via Webex by interview panel. The applicant will be asked to give a brief 10-minute presentation on his/her research achievements. The presentation should include an overview of the motivation for PhD chosen topic of study, and details of specific career and training objectives. The presentation will be followed by questions from the Interview panel.

- ✓ This stage generates a second score based on the interview assessment criteria and the rank order list based on the interview score is generated.

Phase 3- Ranking list development

(5) Main and reserve list: The ESC validates the fellowships offers based exclusively on the ranking established after the interview stage. By ranking order, best-ranked 25 candidates are offered position of doctoral candidate. A reserve list of 5 candidates for the call is also established allowing additional offers in case of withdrawing.

(6) Redress: After completion of each evaluation and selection phase (review of applications, interview and ranking list), rejected candidates may appeal. Appeals can only be filed in case of process-related shortcomings (eligibility checks, evaluation procedure, etc.). A review of the scientific decision or quality of the evaluators cannot be achieved by this. Appeals must be sent to the PM in written form within one week after the rejection was received. The PM will carefully examine each appeal, forward the result to the ESC for final verification and will inform the appealing candidate about the result within one week.

- ✓ Candidates will be informed by e-mail of their final score, ranking and feedback on their interview outcome. **Successful candidates must notify by e-mail within one week whether or not they accept the offer. If no confirmation by applicant is received within one week after the notification, it is considered that the applicant refused the funding.**

Phase 4-Appointment of doctoral candidates

(7) Notification of applicants with fellowship offer and contracting: Successful candidates will be informed by the PM, who will initiate the drafting of individual employment contracts by the HR department. Candidates must at this stage provide the necessary documents to substantiate the claims made in their self-declaration (regarding eligibility criteria). Degree certificates can be submitted in English; translations must be officially certified.

✓ 25 candidates appointed, 5 on reserve list

Criteria for the selection of researchers

Applicants will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

Criteria 1: Profile of the candidate

Criteria 2: Project idea and motivation

Criteria 3: Interview

These criteria are summarized below, along with their respective weights in the scoring. The evaluation takes into account not only the educational aspects of the applicant but also other activities in the context of career progression and (development of) personal skills.

| 1. Criteria: PROFILE OF CANDIDATE- scoring | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| | Second Cycle degree | Previous research experience | Other merits |
| Criteria | Achieved grade in Second Cycle Degree based on European scale grade comparability. Score ranking: 1-7= 0%; 7-8= 50%; 8-9= 75 % 9-10= 100 % | Previous experience in chosen topic Reference letter(s) | Participation in international conferences (if any) Publications (if any) Participation in research projects (if any) |
| Weight | 50% | 25% | 25% |
| Threshold | Overall grade >4 | | |

| 2. Criteria: PROJECT IDEA and MOTIVATION- scoring | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| | Excellence | Impact | Implementation |
| Criteria | Quality of motivation letter and project idea = research interest quality of the motivation letter detailing the research interests | Expected impact over the applicant's future career, over the research carried out at NIC, as well as potential applicability of the results | Feasibility of the research interests detailed in the application and motivation |
| Weight | 50% | 30% | 20% |
| Threshold | Overall grade >4 | | |

Minimum score 7/10 (70%) needed to proceed to the next phase.

| 3. Criteria: INTERVIEW- scoring | | |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| | Scientific Potencial | Transferrable skills |
| Criteria | Scientific knowledge and interest in the field of the research proposal Career presentation match with the project | Presentation & Communication skills Personal Motivation Team and Leadership skills |
| Weight | 50% | 50% |

The final ranking will be based on the profile of candidate, project idea/motivation and the interview scoring with weighting:

| FINAL SCORE | | | |
|-------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|
| Criteria | 1- Profile of candidate | 2- Project idea and motivation | 3- Interview |
| Weight | 30% | 30% | 40% |

5. CONTACT

For additional information applicants can contact NIC Project Office via e-mail: s4f@ki.si