

AIB TRINITY CLIMATE HUB

Choose Europe for Science Fellowship: Frequently Asked Questions

Answers to common questions about eligibility, applying, the research programme and life in Dublin.

1. Eligibility

Q1.1 Is there a limit on how long ago my PhD was awarded?

No. There is no limit on the number of years since your PhD, unlike the MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships, which have an eight-year limit. Applicants from abroad, including those working in academia as faculty, are welcome. Your career stage is considered in the evaluation: someone just finishing a PhD is not expected to have the same track record as someone ten years after it. The programme is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion throughout the process.

Q1.2 Can I apply without a PhD, for example with a master's degree?

No. Holding a PhD, or having defended your thesis by the submission deadline, is the main eligibility criterion.

Q1.3 Can I apply if I have submitted my thesis, but my viva has not taken place yet?

No. Under the Marie Curie rules, your PhD must be awarded or defended by the application deadline.

Q1.4 How strict is the PhD requirement?

Very strict. Applicants must have been awarded, or have defended, their PhD by the application deadline.

2. Application materials and submission

Q2.1 Can I include a publication list in the narrative CV?

Yes, you can include a list of your publications. H-index and journal impact factors should not be included, in line with the narrative CV guidelines.

Q2.2 Which documents do I need to submit?

The full list of required documents is on the programme website. Please also see the below;

1. Narrative CV Template (DORA Compliant)
Focus: Qualitative descriptions of achievements, key contributions to knowledge, leadership skills, and collaborative outputs rather than journal impact factors or h-indexes ([example template](#))
2. Research Proposal Template (MSCA Guidelines)
Focus: Maximum 10 pages following MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowship structures (1. Excellence, 2. Impact, 3. Implementation, in the format of part B-1: [link](#)). Please note, you do not need to fill in section 1.3 quality of the supervision or section 3.2 on the quality of the host institution.
3. Horizon Europe Ethics Self-Assessment: [link](#)

Q2.3 How do I submit my application?

Applications are sent by email to Dr Thomas Connor, with “MSCA application” in the subject line.

Q2.4 Do I need to describe the host, the supervisors' expertise and the facilities in my application?

No. The supervisors and Trinity's facilities were presented in the Choose Europe application, so you do not need to explain links to them elsewhere in your application. You can still mention a facility you would like to use if it strengthens your project.

Q2.5 What are the two references for? Are they suggested external reviewers?

No. The application asks for two references, not suggested reviewers. These are people such as past job supervisors or close collaborators who can provide a reference for your application.

Q2.6 Does one of my references have to be my PhD supervisor?

No. You can choose your references as you see fit.

3. Project scope and topic

Q3.1 Are there any preferred policy outputs?

There are no specific requirements. The programme hopes the research will have impact for species of conservation importance and for socioeconomically important species, but this is not mandatory.

Q3.2 Is the research proposal developed by the applicant, or does it have to meet specific aims?

Proposals are developed by the applicant, and the scope is very broad. The project must be relevant to the Northeast Atlantic. For example, a proposal on tropical reef ecology would not fit.

Q3.3 Do I need prior experience of the region?

No, and you will not be penalised for lacking it. If you have used interesting methods elsewhere, such as in the tropics, you are encouraged to propose applying them in the Northeast Atlantic.

Q3.4 Is my topic in scope? For example, plant dynamics, ecology, functional types, marine food webs, trophic dynamics or remote sensing.

Yes. The scope is very wide, and all of these are fair game.

Q3.5 Should the project cover the wider Northeast Atlantic, or can it focus on the Irish coast?

Either. You can choose any spatial extent, and both can be very competitive. A wider region may let you argue broader impacts. The programme is building links across countries in the Northeast Atlantic, for example through the European Tracking Network, which holds acoustic telemetry data across Scandinavia and northern Europe.

Q3.6 Are there any species or groups the programme is looking for, such as pelagic, mesopelagic, commercial or conservation-priority species?

No, you are free to choose. The call emphasises species of conservation concern or socioeconomic importance, but given the ecological connections, almost any species would meet that.

4. Supervisors and collaboration

Q4.1 Can I contact the supervisors before applying?

Yes, applicants are welcome to get in touch. To keep the process fair, the team will not give feedback on written materials or help develop an application before the deadline. You can, however, discuss an idea with a PI, who can tell you whether they would be excited to work on it.

Q4.2 Is cross-collaboration or a specific project preferred?

Both are possible. The fellowship has a lot of interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral work built in, with agency and industry collaboration, and the programme hopes to see work across groups. That is only part of the evaluation, though, and a strong, specific project can do well.

Q4.3 Can I work with more than one supervisor?

Yes. You name a preferred supervisor, but that does not guarantee they have capacity to take you on, and you are not tied to them. You can work across several groups at different points in your project.

Q4.4 Does my project need to involve all the labs and PIs?

No. The programme envisions a cohesive team with joint meetings and check-ins, but a project can be as specific as you like and does not need to involve every research group.

Q4.5 Can collaboration between the fellows' projects be built into the proposals?

The programme would love to see fellows collaborate once they start working together. It would be difficult to evaluate at proposal stage, however, because external reviewers will not see the other proposals and could not compare them.

Q4.6 Can I propose a research network with another country, for example between Chile and Ireland?

Yes, especially if you can link it to important research questions in the Northeast Atlantic. Four years gives time to establish international networks.

Q4.7 Can my project link Ireland with a non-European country such as Canada?

Yes. Canada and Ireland share ocean boundaries, and the currents and movements between them would be interesting to investigate.

Q4.8 Should I contact supervisors first, and does my proposal need to match their subject areas?

You can reach out but expect a short reply rather than detailed feedback. Proposals do not need to line up with any supervisor's ideas. Fellows drive their own projects, and supervisors act in a supporting role.

Q4.9 Is there any scope for mobility across Europe?

Yes. The fellowship is based in Dublin, but fellows can go on secondments to partner organisations in other countries, and partners of interest can be identified and developed. Four years allows time to build those relationships, and the skills you gain transfer across European institutions.

5. Data, fieldwork and resources

Q5.1 How integrated is the work with local management and conservation, and is fieldwork possible?

Integration is intended to be very high, with good buy-in from the Marine Institute. Two places are available for postdocs on the Marine Institute's annual three-week ocean climate research cruise. You need previous seagoing experience and the required safety certifications. On board, you can collect your own data or help researchers collect data.

Q5.2 Where can I find details of the research cruise, such as region and timing?

Contact the Marine Institute. You can include the cruise in your proposal and assume you will be taking part. If you would like more detail before you submit, the programme team can help put you in touch.

Q5.3 Can field sampling take place outside Ireland, or use populations from across the Atlantic?

Data from across the Atlantic can be used. The research budget for your own fieldwork is limited, though, unless you have strong existing collaborations to rely on. The programme's strongest connections are in Ireland, which makes collecting field data there easiest.

Q5.4 Will fellows have access to existing datasets, for example for species distribution models?

Yes. A lot of data is available, including the Marine Institute's oceanographic database, which suits distribution modelling. The institute has committed to running training on how to access and download it, and there are many public repositories. Fellows are not expected to collect all their own data.

6. Evaluation and interviews

Q6.1 Does the programme aim for a balance of topics, such as ecology, physics, physiology and oceanography?

No. Selection is merit-based, and topic balance is not part of the evaluation. If the strongest proposals happen to be in one field, that field will be well represented. Two strong applicants working on the same topic could both be funded.

Q6.2 When will interviews take place?

The dates are not finalised. They depend on how quickly the external expert review is completed. Interviews are hoped to begin around November, and applicants will be told as soon as dates are known.

Q6.3 Are supervisors involved in the review, for example at the interview stage?

The interview panel is not finalised. It is expected to include one or more of the PIs, alongside a diverse mix of panel members, such as a non-academic member and possibly an international one. Projects are chosen on merit, not on personal research preferences.

7. Start date and timing

Q7.1 How flexible is the start date?

Fairly strict. Fellows are expected to start by 1 January so that the full four years fit within the funding window. This may shift depending on how the evaluation goes, and some flexibility is possible case by case (see below).

Q7.2 Is there a fixed start date, or is it agreed with the supervisors?

Ideally fellows start in January to get the full four years. The funding has a limit on when it must be spent, but a later start can be discussed and negotiated. The earlier you can start, the better.

Q7.3 The website says December or shortly after. What if I am waiting on other grant decisions?

The funding has a limit that may not be extendable, so starting as early as possible is ideal. Requests are considered case by case, depending on who is successful and their circumstances.

Q7.4 What if visa processing or relocation means I cannot start on 1 January? Can I start remotely?

This is handled case by case. If an ideal candidate cannot relocate in time, the programme may ask its funders for an extension, though this cannot be guaranteed. For a major international move, a hybrid start can also be discussed. Applicants will not be penalised for being unable to start on 1 January because of visa delays, so this should not deter you from applying.

8. Visas and immigration

Q8.1 Is visa support available for international applicants?

Eligibility for an employment permit is assessed separately by Ireland's Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, and it is separate from MSCA eligibility. Trinity provides its own immigration and visa support. Non-visa-required nationals should contact Trinity at least four weeks in advance once they have the approved paperwork from HR. Visa-required nationals should allow at least eight to ten weeks. Queries can be sent to workperm@tcd.ie.

Q8.2 What should non-EU applicants do to make sure they are eligible?

Successful non-EU candidates may need an employment permit, depending on their nationality and circumstances, and visa requirements still apply to visa-required employees. Check the immigration requirements as early as possible, because Trinity needs to establish the right immigration route before the fellowship starts. [The Trinity Global Office](#) can also help international candidates and applicants.

9. Fellowship terms and life in Dublin

Q9.1 How does the fellowship relate to Marie Curie Actions?

It is part of the Choose Europe programme, which sits under Marie Curie Actions and is funded through it. You join through the application process.

Q9.2 Is the role flexible in working hours, and can it be done remotely?

There is flexibility around working hours, for example for family and caretaking responsibilities. The position cannot be fully remote, though. Fellows need to be based in Ireland, most likely in Dublin. Travel can be accommodated, and funding is available for travel and mobility.

Q9.3 Is teaching or supervision a required part of the role?

No, it is not expected. It can be built in if it supports your career development, for example supervising postgraduate students, undergraduate capstone projects and taught master's projects across the groups. If you are not heading into academia, you do not need to take part.

Q9.4 What is the after-tax salary, and what are typical living costs?

An online Irish tax calculator, such as [PwC Ireland](#), can estimate your take-home pay. Accommodation is the biggest cost in Dublin, followed by food. While Dublin is expensive, the salary should provide a comfortable standard of living. Costs vary depending on your household and lifestyle, so it is worth checking average costs for your situation.

Q9.5 Can I take the funding to another institution part-way through the four years?

No. The funding is tied to Trinity. If you are currently on a contract elsewhere, whether you can move during that contract depends on its terms.

10. Career development

Q10.1 Does the fellowship count as competitive funding for later-stage postdocs?

It can be presented that way. The fellowship is highly competitive, so winning it can be presented as a grant-writing success.

Q10.2 What support is there for careers after the fellowship ends?

Career development is a core part of the Choose Europe scheme and is built into the programme. Fellows develop a distinctive set of skills that makes them very employable in Europe. The climate hub can also help with developing funding proposals and planning next steps. Because the programme is inter-sectoral, with agency, industry and NGO partners, you do not need to follow an academic path. It also prepares fellows for careers in policy, agencies and industry.

Q10.3 How much career development and supplementary activity can be included in the research proposal?

You can include supplementary activities such as teaching, supervision and career development. There should be space for them, as the proposal is not only about research methods and objectives.