

EURAXESS Australia and New Zealand

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EURAXESS Australia and New Zealand Newsletter is a quarterly electronic newsletter, edited by EURAXESS Australia and New Zealand, which provides information of specific interest to European and non-European researchers in Australia and New Zealand who are interested in the European research landscape and conducting research in Europe or with European partners.

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Editor: Nishant Shandilya,
EURAXESS Australia and
New Zealand, Country
Representative



1 Briefing: ERC funding for researchers and Synergy Grants

The European Research Council (ERC) is a funding organisation for frontier research. It aims to stimulate scientific excellence in Europe by funding the very best, creative researchers of any nationality and age, and supporting their innovative ideas. Researchers from anywhere in the world can apply for ERC grants provided the research they undertake will be carried out in an EU Member State or Associated Country.



The ERC's grants are becoming more and more internationally recognised as awards for scientific excellence. Please click on the image below to read more.

<p>ERC STARTING GRANTS</p>	<p>ERC CONSOLIDATOR GRANTS</p>
<p>Grants up to 1.5€ million for 5 years</p> <p>For promising early-career researchers with 2 to 7 years experience after PhD</p>	<p>Grants up to 2€ million for 5 years</p> <p>For excellent researchers with 7 to 12 years experience after PhD</p>
<p>ERC ADVANCED GRANTS</p>	<p>ERC PROOF OF CONCEPT</p>
<p>Grants up to 2.5€ million for 5 years</p> <p>For established research leaders with a recognised track record of research achievements</p>	<p>Lump Sum Grant of 150.000€</p> <p>For existing ERC grant holders to bring their research ideas closer to market</p>
<p>SYNERGY GRANTS</p>	<p>ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES</p>
<p>Grants up to 10€ million for 6 years</p> <p>To address ambitious research questions that can only be answered by the coordinated work of a small group of 2-4 principal Investigators</p>	<p>For researchers wishing to work or gain experience in an ERC grantee's team</p>



For the first time under the 2019 Work Programme, one Principal Investigator per Synergy Grant group at any one time can be hosted or engaged by an institution outside of the EU or Associated Countries.

So, what are the ERC Synergy Grants?

Who can apply?

A group of two to maximum four Principal Investigators (PIs) – of which one will be designated as the corresponding PI (cPI) – working together and bringing different skills and resources to tackle ambitious research problems. No specific eligibility criteria regarding the academic training are foreseen for ERC Synergy Grants. The PIs must present an early achievement track-record or a ten-year track-record, whichever is most appropriate.

Proposals will be evaluated on the sole criterion of scientific excellence which, in the case the ERC Synergy Grants, takes on the additional meaning of outstanding intrinsic “synergetic effect”.

What proposals are eligible?

Criteria: Applications can be made in any field of research. The ERC’s grants operate on a ‘bottom-up’ basis without predetermined priorities. In the case of the ERC Synergy Grants, applications must demonstrate that the proposed research cannot be carried out by a single PI working alone.

Location: Research must be conducted by all PIs in a public or private research organisation (known as a Host Institution, HI). It could be the HI where the applicant already works, or any other HI established in one of the EU Member States or Associated Countries. For the first time under the 2019 Work Programme, one Principal Investigator per Synergy Grant group at any one time can be hosted or engaged by an institution outside of the EU or Associated Countries.

How much?

Synergy Grants can be up to a maximum of €10 million for a period of six years (pro-rata for projects of shorter duration). However, an additional €4 million can be requested in the proposal (in total) to cover:

- Eligible ‘start-up’ costs for Principal Investigators moving to the EU or an Associated Country from elsewhere as a consequence of receiving an ERC grant (and/or)
- The purchase of major equipment (and/or)
- Access to large facilities

An ERC grant can cover up to 100% of the total eligible direct costs of the research plus a contribution of 25% of the total eligible costs towards indirect costs.

For more details, click [here](#).

How about the team?

ERC Synergy Grants support projects carried out by a group of two to four individual researchers who can employ researchers of any nationality as team members. It is also possible to have one or more team members located in a third country. Vacancies for team members interested in joining an ERC-led research project can be published on the EURAXESS jobs portal.

How to apply?

Applications can only be submitted in response to a call for proposals. The ERC has yearly calls covering all scientific fields. For an ERC grant application to be complete, it needs to include the administrative forms, the research proposal and the supplementary documents. The completed proposal should be submitted by the specified closing date. Calls published can be accessed on the European Commission’s [Funding and Tenders Portal](#).



2 Hot topic: Let's hear from one of the first Australian Synergy Grant recipient!



"It is great that the EU provides such outstanding opportunity for groundbreaking idea development. That is where real opportunities start, which do not just optimise industrial processes, but bring them to an entire new level and transform the global business landscape. That is where science is reinvented, new capabilities are created, and packaged into a system, which is unseen so far" -
Professor Volker Hessel

Professor Volker Hessel from the University of Adelaide and three principal investigators, as an international team, have won an AU\$16 million ERC Synergy Grant (which is part of the European Union's research and innovation programme, Horizon 2020). Prof. Hessel achieved this while still in Europe and does it now in a part-time capacity at the University of Warwick in England. The SCOPE project (Surface-CONfined fast-modulated Plasma for process and Energy intensification in small molecules conversion) will investigate how new kinds of plasma and their symbiotic interaction with proprietary catalysts can be harnessed to transform the production of fertilisers. Prof. Hessel will focus on how disruptive production concepts can lead to entirely new business cases, which may induce industrial transformation on a scale which extends beyond the chemical industry to agriculture and farming. In a more far-fetched scenario, the technology could be even used to grow food on Mars, as it is compact, uses green energy from the Sun, and only requires nitrogen and water as the hydrogen source.

Question: Could you please give us some insights on how you decided to pursue this opportunity?

Prof. Hessel: I was very lucky to have been awarded previous ERC and Research Excellence Grants, including ERC Advanced, ERC Proof of Concept, and FET Open. The only ERC grant that I had not been awarded before 2018 was the Synergy Grant. I love its concept of achieving excellence through teamwork. It is great that the EU provides such outstanding opportunity for groundbreaking idea development. That is where real opportunities start, which do not just optimise industrial processes, but bring them to an entirely new level and transform the global business landscape. That is where science is reinvented, new capabilities are created and packaged into a system, which is unseen so far.



Prof. Dr. Volker Hessel studied chemistry at Mainz University; PhD in organic chemistry, 1993). In 1994, he entered the Institut für Mikrotechnik Mainz, Germany (IMM). In 2002, Prof. Hessel was appointed vice-director R&D at IMM and in 2007 as director R&D. In 2005 and 2011, Prof. Hessel was appointed as part-time and full professor at the Eindhoven University of Technology, respectively. He was honorary professor at TU Darmstadt, Germany 2009-2018, and is a guest professor at Kunming University of Science and Technology, China (2011-), and part-time professor at the University of Warwick/UK (2019-). In 2018, Prof. Hessel was appointed as deputy dean (research) and full professor at the School of Chemical Engineering and Advanced Materials in the ECMS Faculty at the University of Adelaide, Australia. He is the research director of Adelaide's Centre of Sustainable Planetary and Space Resources. He is (co-)author of 474 peer-reviewed (h-index: 59). He received the AIChE Award 'Excellence in Process Development Research' in 2007, the ERC Advanced Grant 'Novel Process Windows' in 2010, the ERC Proof of Concept Grant in 2017, the IUPAC ThalesNano Prize in Flow Chemistry in 2016, the FET OPEN Grant in 2016, and the ERC Synergy Grant 2018. He was authority in the 35-strong team Parliament Enquete Commission 'Future of the Chemical Industry' in Nordrhein-Westfalia. Prof. Hessel's current research focuses both on fundamentals for new microfluidic and plasma-catalytic process concepts as well as on the development of applied technology for Australia's markets in health, energy, space, and agrifood.

Question: You will be working with principal investigators from Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and the UK who will bring together different skills and resources to tackle this ambitious research project. How did you choose who to collaborate with?

Prof. Hessel: I like the ERC Synergy idea of a team working in perfect harmony and symbiosis – every team member is indispensable, and the best in his/her field. A team with aspirations that go beyond any single researcher's capability. Thus, I was looking for 'the best' who would also be perfect team mates. And that alone was not even enough! Those single points of excellence needed to be supplementary and form a 'higher hierarchy' of excellence on a systemic level. A great choir is needed, and not solely a band of great singers.

Question: For the first time under the 2019 Work Programme, researchers from Australia and New Zealand were able to avail research funding through ERC Synergy Grants. What do you think are the benefits of applying for these funding (in addition to the availability of financial resources)?

Prof. Hessel: Fundamental, groundbreaking ideas hardly ever generate commercial success in a straight mode and in their own right. Rather, they slowly yet massively create 'public goods' as strong multipliers for widespread national valorisation and technology proliferation; the Apollo 11 moon landing was such a public good. Thus, the ERC Synergy Grants inspire Australian researchers to explore multiple business opportunities, Australia-wide, rather than aim for a single innovation or patent. They can also apply for an Australian ARC Laureate Grant (ca. €2.5 million, \$A4 million) in recognition of outstanding excellence. This covers capacity building (team, equipment) and the performance of world-class research – everything a scientist dreams of. Yet, it creates more value than the simplistic cash argument. The ERC collaboration also helps to shape the research of Australian researchers by learning concepts from their counterparts on another continent. Internationalisation is the key word here. They will boost their reputation globally. In addition, the Australian researchers can widen their scope in systems science, which also widens their 'capability track record'. They can commence entirely new research fields by merging with their partners' research. ERC Synergy is not just a high-volume fund, it is a wonderful research endeavour and training on the highest level.

Question: Do you have any suggestion/advice for Australian researchers (at any stage of their career) on how to go about applying for European funding?

Prof. Hessel: I think the research services at Australia's major universities are well prepared for helping their best researchers to get a European grant. Yet, this might not be the first priority in their daily business. The Australian researchers should be proactive and seek their advice. It is about becoming aware that a unique opportunity is now open, which has not been seen in the two decades of EU-Australia relations.



Question: This is one of the first time an Australian university (i.e. the University of Adelaide) has been awarded an ERC Synergy Grant. What do you think are the barriers to the participation of Australian researchers in these grant applications?

Prof. Hessel: It is the 'unknown' and the fact that it is so new. Most Australian researchers are simply so busy with their own grants that they hardly have time to familiarise themselves with the European options. Actually, it is easy for them in the ERC Synergy case, since the coordinator will come from Europe and the major workload will fall on him/her. The European idea of amalgamating the individual researchers into a 'whole' may take some getting used to for Australian researchers who are accustomed to having less tight interwoven chief investigator roles.



3 In focus: MSCA-IF Call 2020 is opening on 8 April, so plan your post-doctoral stay now!

Are you interested in a two-year postdoc stay in Europe with EU funding to work on your dream project? Then the highly prestigious [MSCA Individual Fellowships](#) should be on your radar.

While the 2020 call will open only on 8 April (with a deadline of 9 September 2020), now is the time to identify a host in Europe and to start developing your proposal.

What is this?

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) contribute to excellent research, boosting jobs, growth and investment by equipping researchers with the new knowledge, skills and international and intersectoral exposure to fill the top positions of tomorrow and solve current and future societal challenges.

The MSCA thrive by being open to all domains of research and innovation, chosen freely by the applicants in a fully bottom-up manner. They are based on the principle of mobility, and researchers can receive funding on the condition that they move from one country to another to acquire new knowledge and develop their research career.



There are two types of Individual Fellowships; European Fellowships and Global Fellowships.

- **European Fellowships** are open to researchers of any nationality (including Australia and New Zealand) moving 'to Europe' for their fellowship. These Fellowships are held in the [EU or Associated Countries](#) and last for one to two years.
- **Global Fellowships** are open to researchers of any nationality who are based in the [EU or Associated Countries](#) moving 'to the world'



(including Australia and New Zealand) for their fellowship. These Fellowships last between two and three years. The researcher has to come back for one year to an organisation based in the EU or Associated Countries.

Both types of Fellowship can also include a secondment period of three to six months in another organisation in Europe.

What does the funding cover?

The grant provides an allowance to cover living, travel and family costs. In addition, the EU contributes to the training, networking and research costs of the fellow, as well as to the management and indirect costs of the project. The grant is awarded to the host organisation, usually a university, research centre or a company in Europe.

How do I apply?

Applicants submit a research proposal, including their CV. The proposal is written jointly with the chosen host organisation(s).

EURAXESS tutorial: [How to submit an MSCA-IF application](#)

Where do I find Information?

- The [MSCA website](#)
- The [Net4Mobility+ website](#)
- Webinar slides, [How to write a successful MSCA-IF proposal](#) (German Horizon 2020 National Contact Point for the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (NCP MSCA))
- [Advice](#) on proposal preparation by MSCA Fellow Judit Chamorro-Servent

I want to go to Europe with an MSCA-IF European Fellowship. How do I find a host?

- Search the [EURAXESS database of hosting offers](#).
- Search the [Net4Mobility+ database of expressions of interest](#).
- TIP: Be proactive and start identifying a European host as early as possible!

Who can apply?

MSCA Individual Fellowships are open to experienced researchers from across the world. Applicants need a doctoral degree or at least four years' full-time research experience by the time of the call deadline.

What can be funded?

All research areas can be funded. MSCA Fellows come from a wide variety of disciplines – from physics to linguistics, and from health-sciences to mathematical modelling.



4 In case you missed it...

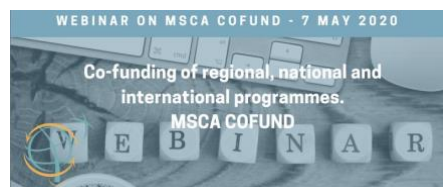
4.1 Event outlook – Universities Australia Conference 2020

EURAXESS Australia and New Zealand had the privilege to welcome research stakeholders from across Australia at the information stand hosted by the EU Delegation to Australia together with some of the EU Member States at the Universities Australia Conference 2020 (Canberra, 25-27 February 2020).



The conference brought together 650+ participants from the higher education and research sectors. Participants included vice-chancellors, chancellors, senior university representatives, government representatives, industry representatives, members of the research community, international education specialists, and the media.

4.2 Upcoming webinars



Webinar on MSCA COFUND – 7 May 2020

- Are you interested in managing doctoral programmes or fellowship programmes for researchers?
- Does your organisation recruit, supervise, host or train researchers?
- Do you wish to learn more about COFUND calls for proposal? They are open to applicants (regional authorities, government

Webinar on MSCA IF – 2 June 2020

- Are you an experienced researcher thinking about your next career move?
- Are you interested in developing your career through research and training by working abroad?
- Do you wish to learn more about EU funding for individual researchers that boosts scientific excellence and enhances researchers' career prospects



ministries, funding agencies, universities, research organisations and enterprises) managing fellowship programmes.

through developing their skills in entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation?

Read more and register [here](#)

Read more and register [here](#)

4.3 From our Flashnotes

Through our Flashnotes, we summarise the news and opportunities of the week. The Flashnotes focus on hot topics, information related to research mobility, cooperation, funding, jobs, and more.

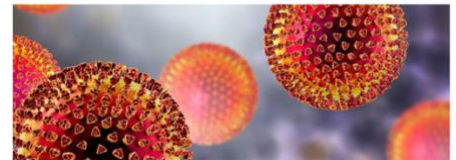
Meanwhile, read the eight Flashnotes that have been published in this quarter by clicking the respective images below.

In view of the recent COVID-19-induced restrictions, we intend to organise a series of webinars that will substitute physical events. These webinars will be published in advance in the future editions of the Flashnotes. Stay tuned!

EURAXESS Australia and New Zealand hub is operational now.



European Commission Research Actions on Coronavirus



€387 million to support 2,500 researchers in Europe and beyond



Key Facts and Figures for Australia and New Zealand in H2020 - MSCA



MSCA-IF Call 2020 Opening Soon: Plan Your Postdoctoral Stay Now!



Gender Equality Strategy 2020 - 2025



European Commission Research Actions on Coronavirus



Researching Innovative Opportunities with Australia





4.4 EURAXESS Australia and New Zealand social media presence

If you want to receive interesting opportunities and updates on a regular basis, please follow us on LinkedIn and Facebook by clicking the below images.

LinkedIn



Facebook

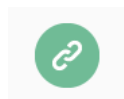


If you think your connections or network would benefit from the hub activities, we welcome you to share this Newsletter, through any of the following ways:



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