FP7 Marie Curie Life-long Training and Career Development Evaluation: Individual Fellowships and Co-funding Mechanism

Final Report
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Executive Summary

In January 2011 the European Commission (DG EAC) appointed ECORYS to carry out an interim evaluation of particular Marie Curie Actions under the FP7 PEOPLE programme – Activity 2 (Lifelong Training and Career Development) and Activity 4 (International Dimension).

The particular focus of this interim evaluation was to conduct a first assessment of the new co-funding mechanism (COFUND) introduced into Activity 2, to explore how it is working, how it compares with the longer established Individual Fellowships modality and what differences there are.

The importance of this evaluation stems in particular from the need to explore commitments made at the time of the 2006 Council Decision, which sought to examine the comparative performance of the COFUND mechanism stipulating that: "Both implementation modes [of the People Programme Activity 2] will be run in parallel from the beginning, with the co-funding mode initially on a controlled scale allowing for the necessary experience to be gained. In the course of the Framework Programme an impact assessment of the two modes will determine the implementation modalities for the remainder of the programme."

Marie Curie Activities 2 and 4

Marie Curie Actions (MCA) are divided into five Activities. In Activity 2 these are being delivered through two modalities: Individual Fellowships and the co-funding mechanism (COFUND).

The aim of the Individual Fellowships within Activity 2 is to support the career development of experienced researchers, targeting the acquisition of new skills and competences, the enhancement of interdisciplinary and/or inter-sectoral mobility, and support for researchers who are resuming a research career after a break or are re-integrating into a longer-term position in Europe after a period abroad.

The aim of COFUND within Activity 2 is to increase transnational mobility and career development opportunities, by using the EU contribution to leverage national, regional and international funds. It seeks to open up existing and/or create new regional, national and international fellowship programmes and link them to the mobility objectives of the Marie Curie Actions. It does this by co-financing a series of regional, national or international programmes that support three types of mobility: Outgoing, Incoming and Re-integration grants. Organisations applying for the COFUND scheme have to be located in the EU27 or in FP7 Associated Countries1.

In order to assess the full scope of Individual Fellowship and COFUND activity, two particular actions within Activity 4, the 'International Dimension', were included: International Outgoing Fellowships and International Incoming Fellowships.

The indicative budget for the period 2007-2010 in respect of Activity 2 'Life-long Training and Career Development' was €448 million for the Individual Fellowships and €215 million for COFUND. In addition,

1 Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Faroe Islands, FYR Macedonia, Iceland, Israel, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkey and, from 2012, Moldova.
the two international fellowship programmes within Activity 4 'International Dimension' had an indicative budget of €210 million. As such, funding for COFUND is approximately a quarter of the indicative budget for individual fellowships.

Evaluation method

Our evaluation was based on a number of principal tasks:

- Data analysis and desk-based research based on policy documentation and programme data.
- Online surveys of Individual Fellows, COFUND fellows and host organisations, providing responses from 1,380 Individual Fellows, 504 COFUND fellows and 566 host organisations - giving response rates of 45%, 16% and 11% respectively.
- Telephone survey of 44 COFUND beneficiary organisations, giving a response rate of 90% of the active programmes.
- Consultations with MCA fellows, host institutions and COFUND beneficiary organisations; and wider consultations with national bodies (e.g. research funding bodies and contact points), European institutions (e.g. DG EAC/ the Research Executive Agency) and the wider scientific research community (e.g. external evaluators and special interest groups). In total, 126 interviews were undertaken (through a combination of face-to-face and telephone interviews).

Overall, the robustness of the results is strong and they provide a sound basis on which to draw relevant conclusions. Owing to the short time frames involved the extent to which we are able to draw conclusions relating to the overall impact of the respective programmes is limited.

Summary of findings

Performance to date

The COFUND mechanism was a novel introduction to the 7th Framework Programme, with the first call for applications launched in 2007. The budget for COFUND during the period considered by this evaluation was around €215 million. Once beneficiary funding are taken into account (based on an EU contribution of 40%) the total COFUND budget could eventually rise to around €540 million.

Calls for applications for COFUND were launched under the 2007, 2008 and 2010 work programmes. All calls have been oversubscribed with success rates running at around 60%. In total some 81 programmes have been approved for funding, with the potential to support some 4,731 Fellowships over the coming years (or, looked at in another way, some 7,905 fellow-years). The actual number of COFUND Fellows who are in post at the current time is significantly less than this, at around 3,200, since programmes take some time to get up and running. During the same time period around 4,405 Individual Fellowships were approved for funding under Activity 2 and Activity 4 of the Marie Curie Actions. Only a very limited number of institutions have hosted both Individual Fellows and COFUND Fellows.
In terms of geographical distribution overall, 30 countries have hosted Individual Fellows. The UK hosts more than a quarter of these and France, Spain and Germany also host a significant share (approaching a third as a combined group). Of the remaining host countries, Israel, the Netherlands, Italy and Switzerland host the highest number of fellows. The UK, Switzerland, Norway and Denmark are net receivers, whilst a number of New Member States such as Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Slovakia, together with Spain and Italy, can be considered as net providers of Individual Fellows.

In terms of geographical patterns for COFUND, programmes have been set up in 15 out of the 27 EU Member States. Spain is a dominant player with 19 COFUND programmes, representing almost a quarter of all programmes. Other countries with several programmes include Italy (11), Germany, France (both 8), the Republic of Ireland (5), Belgium and Sweden (both 4). To date 11 programmes have been funded in Associated Countries, although ten of these have been funded in Switzerland, with the remaining COFUND programme outside the EU located in Iceland.

COFUND Fellows are currently hosted in some 24 countries, particularly Germany, France, the UK, Italy, Spain and Switzerland. The geography of mobility is currently more concentrated, but in principle does not appear to differ substantially from that present in Individual Fellowships. This is partly a reflection of the youthfulness of the COFUND mechanism.

In terms of the nationality of researchers, COFUND supports a significantly larger share of Third Country nationals than Individual Fellowships, largely on account of greater involvement of Chinese and Indian researchers. Participation by EU15 nationals is broadly the same across both modalities, whilst participation by EU12 and Associated Country nationals is slightly lower in COFUND.

The balance of research areas supported under COFUND is similar to that of Individual Fellowships. In practice, a higher proportion of COFUND Fellows are involved in Life Science research and Engineering with fewer Fellows engaged in Environmental, Economic and Mathematics research. The dominance of Life Sciences in both modalities, but especially COFUND, is notable.

Relevance

The objectives of COFUND and Individual Fellowship Actions have proved relevant to EU political priorities and global objectives, as well as to EU initiatives and programmes in the field of research, notably through addressing the need to strengthen Europe’s human potential in the field of research and technological development. This supports the strategic agendas set out in the Lisbon Treaty and Europe 2020, while complementarity within FP7 and with key initiatives such as European Research Council grants, Joint Technology Initiatives, the European Institute of Innovation and Technology and Structural Funds ensures a sound strategic fit within the overall implementation context of research and innovation. In particular, where such initiatives focus on research, innovation, competitiveness and cohesion, Marie Curie Actions should provide support to the continued development of the human capital required to ensure their success.

The objectives of both COFUND and Individual Fellowship Actions also relate strongly to the aims of the European Research Area. This applies principally to objectives in the area of enhancing the quality and quantity of researchers in Europe, through increasing opportunities for trans-national mobility, enhancing

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2 In the sense of the need to support both the infrastructure and human capital dimensions of research and innovation.
research competences and skills, and supporting career development. COFUND objectives concerning the mobilisation and leveraging of national, regional and international resources and widening opportunities for individuals and research organisations also relate strongly to European Research Area priorities concerning overcoming mobility barriers and addressing fragmentation in the European research landscape. Objectives concerning the enhancement of knowledge transfer and research co-operation, both within Europe and with Third Countries, are also relevant to the development of the European Research Area.

The objectives of both sets of Marie Curie Action fellowships have also proved relevant to the needs of research organisations and research funding organisations and to individual researchers. In the case of organisations, they value the access provided to high quality research talent (from within and outside Europe), which helps to augment their own research teams, leads to a strengthening of research outputs and access to international knowledge networks and international research cooperation. For the individuals, the objectives relate strongly to the need to access high quality research infrastructures and networks across all research fields, have access to a wider range of mobility options and to develop the kind of new research skills and competences that can support career progression and enhance employability. This also addresses the need to encourage researchers to stay in or return to Europe. The objectives of Activity 4 international fellowships have strong relevance to the need to attract researchers to Europe from around the world, by strengthening access to research opportunities and budgets and offering mobility options that would not otherwise be available. The objectives of this Activity have strong relevance to the need to provide researchers from Europe with more opportunities to internationalise their careers.

There is strong involvement in COFUND from beneficiaries in one or two Member States, particularly Spain and Italy, and also from Switzerland. One of the successes of COFUND has been its ability to attract a range of European funding organisations to manage COFUND programmes, from international institutions through national and regional bodies to individual institutions, proving the relevance of the objective to encourage structuring effects. In some Member States governance structures and institutional rules and regulations can mitigate against engagement with COFUND, for example where there is fragmentation amongst potential applicant organisations, a limited pool of researchers or research facilities, alternative provision is available, or funding rules reduce COFUND’s attractiveness.

**Effectiveness and utility**

At the present time the evidence is that, overall, Activity 2 (including COFUND) and Activity 4 of the People Programme are achieving their objectives and as a result the research capacity of the EU is being strengthened through an increase in the quality and quantity of researchers.

Marie Curie Actions Activity 2 and 4 are supporting the career development of experienced researchers, through providing increased opportunities for mobility, to work with leading research groups and to acquire new or enhanced competences and skills. The research outputs of individual researchers and host organisations are being strengthened and the development of long-term knowledge exchange networks is being facilitated. European researchers are being encouraged to return to or stay in Europe and Activity 4 (World Fellowships) is attracting researchers from abroad to further augment that potential. The participation rate of women is satisfactory. Participation in Marie Curie Action individual fellowships remains overwhelmingly within the higher education domain.
Opportunities for inter or multi-sectoral experiences are not being provided, since mobility opportunities between private and public organisations are rare. In terms of acquiring and/or enhancing multi-disciplinary skills the research suggests this is not widespread. However it is a complex area, depending on the definition of multi-disciplinarity and the situation will be variable across research fields.

One aspect which requires further consideration is the extent to which COFUND seeks to complement Activity 2 or to engage in support for researchers who would otherwise fall under Activity 1 of the Marie Curie Actions. There is a dimension of COFUND that is supporting younger researchers, which is in line with the COFUND objective concerning researchers shortly after obtaining their doctorate but not the overall Activity 2 objective.

One area where there is less evidence of effectiveness is in terms of the number of researchers accessing Activity 2 fellowships after a career break. The survey returns suggest that only a very small proportion of Fellows describe themselves as being in this situation. However, there is an important question as to how appropriate international mobility programmes are for those returning to the labour market after a career break. We are not aware of the evidence to suggest that this is a significant issue in the EU and so are unable to assess whether the performance of Activity 2 in this regard is effective or not.

One of the questions which this evaluation has considered is whether the COFUND eligibility rule for participating organisations is correctly defined. Overall, we consider it to be so. The emerging trend of leading universities to manage their own COFUND programmes has perhaps been unexpected but there is no evidence that this is acting to the detriment of the programme as a whole; although should this trend continue the possibility of unbalancing COFUND should be taken into account (in the light of the stronger structuring effects that consortia approaches and the participation of regional/national/international bodies can realise). There is also no evidence that opening COFUND to commercial organisations would provide significant benefits and would entail certain risks. Whilst many stakeholders suggest that they could see a number of benefits from opening up the programme to commercial organisation, we feel that the costs involved in modifying the programme are likely to outweigh the benefits, and that alternative means of engaging private sector mobility should first be considered.

A number of unintended effects have been observed for COFUND, including the relatively high degree of variation and innovation in the implementation of programmes; the widespread use of stipends instead of employment contracts especially in the early years of the programme (albeit a trend which seems to have reversed more recently); and the participation of a number of individual universities as COFUND beneficiaries (and hosts) mentioned above.

While all COFUND programmes are meeting the selection criteria and implementation rules set, these have allowed a relatively high degree of freedom. This is not necessarily undesirable – in line with the de-centralisation principles that underpin COFUND.

**Efficiency and cost-effectiveness**

Overall, the budget allocated to Marie Curie Actions Activity 2 and 4 appears appropriate – the quantity and quality of outputs and results, and success rates for Individual Fellowships appear to be satisfactory, given the need to achieve a balance between attracting an adequate number of applications and maintaining that element of the programme’s reputation for excellence.
Data on unit costs suggests that on average remuneration for Individual Fellowships is slightly higher than for COFUND fellowships – around €80,000 per fellowship year for a typical two-year Individual Fellowship compared with around €70,000 per fellowship year for COFUND (based on total cost where the EU provides a contribution of 40%). On average the employment conditions of Individual Fellows are also slightly better, making working conditions for them generally better. There are a number of reasons for this difference, including the effects of geography (concentration of Individual Fellowships in countries with higher living costs for example); and the relative prevalence of stipends in COFUND, which lowers the average remuneration level.

Funding provided to researchers for living costs is in the form of employment contracts (salaries) or stipends (the latter as a general rule accompanied by reimbursement of social costs). There are certain advantages attached to the use of employment contracts, which are linked to Marie Curie Actions’ principle of encouraging better working conditions. In practice, stipends are relatively rare within Individual Fellowships and are used in around one third of COFUND fellowships approved in the first three calls (of these around half concern outgoing mobility grants). However, a declining trend for stipends is evident for the 2011 Call. The use of stipends results from three main factors: for outgoing mobility, funding organisations have difficulties in funding employment contracts outside their own country, the use of employment contracts is not standard practice within national frameworks for legal/cultural reasons and , finally, organisations are seeking to reduce their costs.

No comparators from other programmes were available to draw upon to make an assessment of the EAC and Research Executive Agency management costs applied to Marie Curie Actions Activities 2 and 4. In 2009 responsibility for COFUND was transferred to the newly formed Research Executive Agency, adding to the complexity of the tasks in hand. Since then efficiency has improved and Research Executive Agency currently has an estimated 4.5 FTE staff engaged on COFUND management and administration, responsible for 100 projects by the end of 2012. A new system is being implemented from the end of 2011 to help monitor COFUND fellowships.

The average duration between call deadlines and contract signature for approved projects is almost 1.5 years. COFUND organisations and the Research Executive Agency all report that this duration is too long. However, there is agreement that in some cases the lengthy approach to negotiate financial contribution based on flat-rate per fellow/year eases the later implementation of these programmes.

In terms of administrative costs for COFUND programme beneficiaries, these can be significant (in particular for new entrants and smaller organisations) and are likely in many cases to extend beyond the provision made within the EU contribution. However, there is wide agreement that the benefits justify the costs.

Administrative costs for hosts (Individual Fellowships and COFUND) are not excessive and there appears to be no great difference between the two modalities. Equally, the majority of researchers and research organisations are satisfied with the funding of research costs.

Impacts

At this stage in the life of COFUND, it is too early to provide definitive findings on impacts. However, a number of interesting insights have emerged and these are now described in four dimensions.
Impact on the European Research Area

COFUND Fellowships are contributing both quantitatively and qualitatively to the reinforcement of the human resource potential of the European Research Area. The quantitative improvements are evident from the number of Fellowships which have been created and filled. The qualitative improvements have been reported on by both individual Fellows and their host institutions. As we have previously identified, this includes the strengthening of research capacities, of research capabilities and of research networks. The benefits can be felt in the host institution for the duration of the Fellowship and in institutions where ex-Fellows are subsequently employed. The anecdotal evidence suggests that the positive benefits for a host institution can extend beyond the duration of the Fellowship owing to the positive network effects which are retained. The effects of Individual Fellowships are as strong and, given the profile of Fellows, may prove to be slightly more substantial, although it is too early for evidence of this to be apparent at this stage.

Equally, the extent to which the numbers and scope of fellowships and programmes respond to the gaps in the mobility of researchers is difficult to assess with certainty, given the lack of data on the scope of unrealised demand. Clearly the fellowships represent a strong response to filling those gaps, while success rates do not suggest any significant mis-match between supply and demand. However, our research has suggested that demand for COFUND is likely to increase in future.

The geographical distribution of COFUND projects will no doubt have some influence on patterns of mobility, particularly in terms of the geography of incoming researchers. It is rather early to arrive at a definitive statement on this. However, at present the geographical pattern of mobility appears to reflect a wider research geography with no evident biases.

Impact on COFUND organisations

Establishing and managing a COFUND programme has affected the administrative and operational procedures of around a third of the organisations concerned, mostly new programmes. Here there have been moderate effects in particular on increasing the openness of recruitment to trans-national mobility and the use of independent/peer review in selection processes. Moderate improvements have also taken place in the transparency of procedures. Overall it appears that while many beneficiary organisations already had appropriate provision in these areas, a minority have been prompted to make changes to bring them into line with best practice.

COFUND also appears to be having an influence on certain strategic aspects of programme administration, particularly with respect to providing a more supportive research environment, providing full employment contracts to researchers and improving recruitment methods and appraisal systems.

A number of aspects were less likely to have changed, including the use of transparent evaluation criteria; assessing research proposals, ensuring portability of pension rights and equal opportunities criteria, the latter probably a result of the widespread appropriateness of pre-existing provision.
Impact on host institutions

Fellowships are predominantly hosted in Higher Education Institutions and, to a much less significant extent, public research organisations. The proportion of COFUND and Individual Fellowships hosted in a private company is insignificant (<2%). The main impact on host organisations is to expand research capacity and give institutions access to high-quality researchers they might not otherwise have attracted. This in turn leads to stronger institutional research outputs and the capacity to tap into wider international knowledge networks. On first appearances COFUND seems to be extending the reach of the Marie Curie Fellowships, with a higher proportion of Fellows hosted in public research organisations than is the case with Individual Fellows.

All institutions report anticipated positive impacts from the hosting of COFUND and Individual Fellows. There is some evidence to suggest that the quality of Fellows coming through Individual Fellowship routes are slightly higher than those coming from the COFUND routes. However, the differences are at the margin.

COFUND is reported to have had a modest positive impact on the operational and administrative procedures of host institutions. Through extrapolation it appears that the effect is greatest in those organisations which have not hosted Marie Curie Fellows in the past. This is to be expected and suggests that the effect of COFUND is acting to further extend the reach of efforts to raise standards across the European Research Area.

Impact on Marie Curie Action Fellows

The average time between the application stage and the selection/signature of the contract is longer for Individual Fellows than for COFUND Fellows. However, the survey evidence suggests that this does not materially affect the average duration between applying for a Fellowship and taking up the position. This may be due to the fact that Individual Fellows are able to make arrangements for their move during the negotiation stage, whilst COFUND Fellows can only make arrangements to move when they find that they have been successful in their application.

Contractual and working conditions vary between Individual Fellows and COFUND Fellows. The remuneration packages of Individual Fellows tend to be higher than those of COFUND Fellows. This appears to be partly due to the greater use of stipends, as opposed to employment contracts, in some COFUND programmes. The use of stipends reflects prevailing practices in some co-funded programmes and is often required owing to national legislation; however, such contracts are less advantageous than full employment contracts. Even allowing for the presence of stipends, remuneration packages for COFUND Fellows appears to remain less generous, although to what extent this is due to the slightly younger age profile of COFUND Fellows is difficult to disentangle.

In terms of access to training, access to research facilities and management arrangements, there do not appear to be significant differences between Individual and COFUND Fellows. Overall, levels of satisfaction of Fellows with their working conditions are very high. Individual Fellows tend to be a little more positive here than COFUND Fellows but the differences are marginal. All Fellows report that they have access to a variety of training opportunities. Access to research-orientated training is positively
regarded. Fellows, both Individual and COFUND, do not appear to value training in activities such as intellectual property rights and entrepreneurship.

Whilst it is rather early to draw conclusions on the extent to which COFUND or Individual Fellowships have contributed to the development of researchers’ careers, the anecdotal evidence is certainly positive. Researchers’ generally believe that their Fellowship has had, and is having, a beneficial effect. Drawing parallels with Fellows from previous programmes suggests that they are correct in their perspectives.

Added value

The high-level objective to support transnational mobility (in the context of contributing to the development of the world’s leading research area as part of increasing the EU’s competitiveness), is being met by Marie Curie Actions Activity 2. A key underpinning element in this context relates to the promotion via Marie Curie Actions of greater awareness and responsiveness to the need to provide experienced researchers with attractive terms and conditions.

Overall there is strong European Added Value to the EU carrying out Marie Curie Actions (Individual Fellowships and COFUND) compared with Member States alone: this derives in particular from the cost effectiveness and economies of scale delivered by having a common strategic approach and management system and from the scheme’s openness in terms of research fields. In addition, the level of visibility and profile that MCA has is more likely to be achieved at a European scale. Measures to address fragmentation, in line with the development of European Research Area, are best implemented through a Europe-wide scheme than via an equivalent series of national schemes.

COFUND has been found to be providing an additional benefit to Marie Curie Individual Fellowships. The programme has enhanced the international dimension of a number of national and regionally-based fellowship programmes in ways that are not open to Individual Fellowship actions. It also appears that COFUND is enabling a new cohort of researchers to access international mobility opportunities which was not possible for them under the existing Marie Curie programmes. In particular, it is assisting those with less well-developed personal contact networks and more limited international experience, to access a new set of international opportunities.

COFUND beneficiaries are generally aware of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for Recruitment of Researchers. In some organisations the Charter and Code are having an influence by stimulating changes and in others by making existing procedures more explicit. Equally some organisations are already compliant. This is helping to contribute to a gradual ‘levelling up’ in employment conditions for researchers.

However, there is no evidence that COFUND is overcoming the fragmentation of funding opportunities in Europe. Indeed, where it is leading to the establishment of new funding programmes it is, arguably, exacerbating this rather than easing it. There is also no evidence that COFUND programmes generate higher benefits for researchers or research organisations as a whole. Rather, the benefits of Marie Curie Individual Fellowships and COFUND Fellowships appear to be broadly equivalent.
Sustainability

From the evidence available it appears that the COFUND programmes are unlikely to develop further without EU support at the current time. It will take time for transnational mobility to become a core element of national and regional programmes.

The visibility of COFUND programmes also needs to be enhanced, particularly the fact that Fellows are supported by the EU. It is widely acknowledged that there is a low recognition of the COFUND dimension of Marie Curie at present and, in too many cases, this was not clearly apparent to the Fellows themselves. The visibility of Individual Fellowships is much stronger, benefiting from a longer history of consistent brand development. Even here, many regarded the visibility to be stronger in the EU than outside of the EU.

In developing sustainable approaches there is also a general agreement that there is a need to develop more mechanisms to improve practices. COFUND beneficiary organisations and NCPs all reported that they would welcome seminars and good practice events which aim to continuously improve the standards of COFUND programmes. This could be of particular value for those organisations considering their first applications.

Recommendations

In the light of the evaluation findings and conclusions set out above, we make the following recommendations:

1. COFUND should be maintained – it provides a valuable complement to Individual Fellowships and the range of participants and approaches it supports gives it strength and flexibility. However, consideration needs to be given to reinforcing the emphasis on experienced researchers to maintain its distinctiveness from other Marie Curie Actions activities aimed at other target groups. There remains a need to embed the principle of transnational mobility in national and regional programmes and the continuation of COFUND will make a contribution in that respect. COFUND’s visibility is low and steps to create a brand identity should be considered, which will assist awareness-raising.

2. Individual Fellowships should be maintained and the status of the scheme as a gold standard strengthened. The Individual Fellowships have a prestigious profile, ensuring the high quality of applicants and providing support to the perception of the attractiveness of the European research area internationally. The former should be safeguarded by ensuring quality standards are maintained (at about current success rates) and the latter presents an opportunity to raise the programme’s visibility outside Europe.

3. The current internal fragmentation of the Marie Curie Actions should be reduced: the number of individual Actions gives an impression of complexity, although in practice there are many similarities (in target group, procedures, grants and so on). Whereas it is useful for monitoring purposes to maintain separate Actions, for a demand-driven programme such a rigid structure is unnecessary.

4. The objective concerning helping researchers to resume their research career after a break places too strong an emphasis on this issue relative to current practice and it would be preferable to modify this
approach to focus more on ensuring applicants in such a position do not face any discrimination and providing encouragement where appropriate.

5. DG EAC and the Research Executive Agency should seek to streamline the negotiations that lead to final approval of COFUND programmes. There is wide agreement that this takes too long and there are two main options for addressing this – firstly by simplifying the procedure (specifically the information requirements – this may entail modification of the rule and regulations); and/or secondly increasing the staff resources applied to the administration of this element of managing COFUND.

6. A watching brief should be kept on who benefits from COFUND. If demand increases (as is likely) one of the largest potential group of beneficiaries are universities and there is a risk that these crowd out other organisations or structures which are more likely to promote synergies between the EU and national/regional levels and bring significant structuring effects to counteract fragmentation. Should such a trend be identified, action might be taken by modifying eligibility rules in annual work programmes (for example, making it mandatory for universities to present proposals as a consortium with others).

7. A watchful eye should also be kept on future research fields. Although this is a decentralised matter, there is a possibility that the Marie Curie Actions Panels, for example, may need to be modified in future if, for example, life sciences increases its predominance any further or new areas emerge which might require adjustments.

8. Ways should be found to engage commercial bodies in Marie Curie Actions, by encouraging or incentivising them to participate, through learning from other relevant industry-academia cooperation schemes for example. This would help to address the current general lack of multi-sectoral or public-private interaction within the programme, while recognising that the industry dimension is also addressed under Marie Curie Actions Activity 3.

9. Consideration should be given to implementing measures aimed at ensuring lessons from COFUND are learned and shared, for example, via seminars and good practice events. Web-based options might also be considered, based around a self-assessment tool. Such measures would help to support continuous improvements in the quality of COFUND programmes and would be particularly useful for new entrants.

10. Consideration should be given to the usefulness of the current labels applied to the different mobility elements of Marie Curie Actions Activity 2 and Activity 4 (IEF, CIG, IOF, IIF and for COFUND Incoming, Outgoing and Re-integration). At present these may have a useful monitoring function for management purposes but, from an outside perspective, they may lead to confusion.

11. Our research suggests that at the moment the balance between Individual Fellowships and COFUND is appropriate. Looking ahead to Horizon 2020, if COFUND was expanded this would deliver better cost-effectiveness. However, Individual Fellowships offer higher added value in terms of profile.
Résumé

En janvier 2011, la Commission européenne (DG EAC) a chargé ECORYS d’effectuer l’évaluation intérimaire de certaines actions Marie Curie relevant des activités 2 (Formation tout au long de la vie et développement de la carrière) et 4 (Dimension internationale) du 7e programme-cadre « Personnes ».

Cette évaluation intérimaire devait consister plus particulièrement à effectuer une première appréciation du nouvel instrument de cofinancement (COFUND) intégré à l'activité 2, notamment en examinant son fonctionnement et en le comparant au système plus ancien des bourses individuelles afin d’identifier les différences entre les deux.

L’importance de cette évaluation résulte notamment du besoin d’étudier les engagements pris au moment de la décision du Conseil de 2006 qui indiquait la nécessité d’examiner la performance comparative du mécanisme COFUND et stipulait : « Les deux modes d’action (de l’activité 2 du programme-cadre « Personnes ») seront exécutés en parallèle dès le début, le mode de cofinancement étant initialement appliqué de manière contrôlée afin que l'expérience nécessaire puisse être acquise. Au cours de la mise en œuvre du programme-cadre, une évaluation de l'incidence des deux modes déterminera quelle sera la marche à suivre pour l'exécution du reste du programme. »

Les activités 2 et 4 Marie Curie

Les actions Marie Curie sont réparties en cinq activités. En ce qui concerne l'activité 2, ces actions sont mises en œuvre par deux moyens : des bourses individuelles, d’une part, et le mécanisme de cofinancement (COFUND), d’autre part.

Les bourses individuelles au sein de l’activité 2 visent à soutenir l’évolution de la carrière des chercheurs expérimentés, en ciblant l’acquisition de nouvelles qualifications et compétences ainsi que la promotion de la mobilité interdisciplinaire et/ou intersectorielle, et aident des chercheurs à reprendre leur carrière après une interruption ou à se réintégrer dans un poste à long terme en Europe après une période à l’étranger.

Le but de COFUND au sein de l’activité 2 est de multiplier les opportunités de développement de carrière et de mobilité transnationale en utilisant la contribution de l'UE pour mobiliser des fonds nationaux, régionaux et internationaux. Ce système de cofinancement cherche à élargir des programmes de bourses régionaux, nationaux et internationaux existants et/ou à en créer de nouveaux et à les associer à des objectifs de mobilité relevant des actions Marie Curie. Il y parvient en cofinançant un ensemble de programmes régionaux, nationaux ou internationaux qui soutiennent trois types de mobilité : les bourses sortantes, les bourses entrantes et les bourses de réintégration.

Les organisations posant leur candidature à un financement COFUND doivent se situer dans l’un des 27 pays membres de l’Union européenne ou dans un pays associé au 7e PC.


3 Albanie, Bosnie-et-Herzégovine, Croatie, îles Féroé, Islande, Israël, Liechtenstein, Monténégro, Norvège, République yougoslave de Macédoine, Serbie, Suisse, Turquie et, à partir de 2012, la Moldavie.

Méthode d’évaluation

Notre évaluation a été fondée sur un certain nombre de tâches principales :

- l’analyse de données et la recherche documentaire reposant sur des documents stratégiques et des données de programmes ;
- des sondages en ligne visant des titulaires d’une bourse individuelle, des titulaires d’une bourse COFUND et des organismes d’accueil, auxquels ont répondu 1 380 titulaires d’une bourse individuelle, 504 titulaires d’une bourse COFUND et 566 organismes d’accueil – soit des taux de réponse respectifs de 45 %, 16 % et 11 % ;
- une enquête téléphonique auprès de 44 organismes bénéficiant du mécanisme COFUND, soit un taux de réponse de 90 % des programmes actifs ;
- des consultations avec des boursiers Marie Curie, des établissements d’accueil et des organismes bénéficiant de bourses COFUND ainsi que des consultations plus larges avec des organismes nationaux (p. ex. des organismes de financement de recherche et des points de contact), des institutions européennes (p. ex. la DG EAC/l’Agence exécutive pour la recherche) et l’ensemble de la communauté de recherche scientifique (p. ex. des évaluateurs externes et des groupes d’intérêts). Au total, 126 entretiens ont eu lieu (certains en face à face, d’autres par téléphone).

D’une manière générale, les résultats sont d’une grande fiabilité et fournissent une base solide sur laquelle établir des conclusions pertinentes. En raison des délais serrés à respecter, nous ne sommes capables de tirer des conclusions sur l’impact global des programmes respectifs que dans une mesure limitée.

Résumé des résultats

Performance jusqu’à ce jour

L’instrument COFUND a été introduit à l’instauration du 7e programme-cadre, le premier appel à candidatures ayant été lancé en 2007. Le budget de cet instrument pour la période étudiée par cette évaluation tournait autour de 215 millions €. Dès la prise en considération du financement des parties bénéficiaires (compte tenu d’une contribution de l’UE de 40 %), le budget total des programmes COFUND pourrait éventuellement s’éléver à environ 540 millions €.

Des appels à candidatures pour des financements COFUND ont été lancés dans le cadre des programmes de travail de 2007, 2008 et 2010. Le nombre de candidatures a dépassé le nombre de financements disponibles, ces appels ayant connu un taux de réussite d’environ 60 %. Au total, quelques 81 programmes ont bénéficié d’un financement et pourront potentiellement soutenir 4 731 boursiers au cours
des années à venir (soit, d'un autre point de vue, 7 905 années de bourse). Le nombre de boursiers COFUND qui occupent actuellement un poste est considérablement inférieur à ce chiffre et tourne autour de 3 200, étant donné que les programmes prennent du temps à devenir opérationnels. Pendant la même période, environ 4 405 titulaires d'une bourse individuelle ont bénéficié de fonds au titre de l’activité 2 et de l’activité 4 des actions Marie Curie. Un nombre très limité d'établissements ont accueilli tant des titulaires de bourses individuelles que des boursiers COFUND.

En termes de distribution géographique générale, 30 pays ont accueilli des titulaires de bourses individuelles. Le Royaume-Uni en accueille plus d’un quart, tandis que la France, l’Espagne et l’Allemagne en accueillent également un pourcentage important (collectivement près d’un tiers). Ensuite, ce sont Israël, les Pays-Bas, l’Italie et la Suisse qui accueillent le plus grand nombre de titulaires de bourses individuelles. Le Royaume-Uni, la Suisse, la Norvège et le Danemark sont des « importateurs » nets, alors qu’un certain nombre de nouveaux États membres, tels que la Pologne, la Hongrie, la Roumanie, la Bulgarie et la Slovaquie, peuvent être considérés comme des « exportateurs » nets de titulaires d'une bourse individuelle, tout comme l’Espagne et l’Italie.


Les boursiers COFUND sont actuellement accueillis dans 24 pays, en particulier l’Allemagne, la France, le Royaume-Uni, l’Italie, l’Espagne et la Suisse. La configuration géographique de la mobilité des boursiers COFUND est donc plus concentrée, mais, en principe, elle ne semble pas différer de manière significative de celle qui concerne les titulaires de bourses individuelles. Cette concentration reflète entre autres la jeunesse de l’instrument COFUND. En ce qui concerne la nationalité des chercheurs, les programmes COFUND aident un pourcentage beaucoup plus élevé de ressortissants de pays tiers que les bourses individuelles, principalement en raison de la participation d’un grand nombre de chercheurs chinois et indiens. La participation des ressortissants de l’UE-15 aux deux types de programmes de financement est pour ainsi dire identique, tandis qu’un nombre légèrement inférieur de ressortissants de l’UE-12 et des pays associés participent aux programmes COFUND.

Les domaines de recherche soutenus par des bourses COFUND font état d’une distribution similaire à ceux qui bénéficient de bourses individuelles. En pratique, une plus grande proportion de boursiers COFUND participe à la recherche spécialisée dans les sciences de la vie et l’ingénierie, alors qu’un nombre inférieur de boursiers sont engagés dans la recherche portant sur l’environnement, l’économie et les mathématiques. La dominance des sciences de la vie est importante dans les deux modes de financement, mais plus particulièrement dans le mode COFUND.

Pertinence

Les objectifs de l’instrument COFUND et des actions de financement de bourses individuelles se sont avérés adaptés aux priorités politiques et objectifs globaux de l’UE ainsi qu’aux initiatives et programmes de l’UE dans le domaine de la recherche, notamment en répondant au besoin de renforcer le potentiel humain de l’Europe dans le domaine de la recherche et du développement technologique. Ils soutiennent
les programmes stratégiques énoncés dans le Traité de Lisbonne et Europe 2020, tandis que leur complémentarité avec d’autres activités du 7e PC et avec des initiatives clés comme les subventions du Conseil européen de la recherche, les initiatives technologiques conjointes, l’Institut européen d’innovation et de technologie et les Fonds structurels assure une bonne concordance stratégique dans le cadre de la mise en œuvre des politiques de recherche et d’innovation. En particulier, lorsque de telles initiatives portent principalement sur la recherche, l’innovation, la compétitivité et la cohésion, les actions Marie Curie doivent soutenir le développement continu du capital humain nécessaire à leur succès.

Les objectifs tant des programmes COFUND que des actions de financement de bourses individuelles sont étroitement liés aux buts de l'Espace européen de la recherche, en particulier les objectifs visant à augmenter la qualité et le nombre des chercheurs en Europe, à travers le développement des possibilités de mobilité transnationale, l’amélioration des compétences et des aptitudes de recherche et l’appui à l’évolution des carrières. Les objectifs COFUND concernant la mobilisation de ressources nationales, régionales et internationales ainsi que la multiplication des perspectives pour les individus et les organismes de recherche sont, eux aussi, étroitement liés aux priorités de l'Espace européen de la recherche constissant à surmonter les obstacles à la mobilité et à lutter contre la fragmentation du paysage européen de la recherche. Les objectifs concernant l’amélioration du transfert des connaissances et de la recherche collaborative à la fois au sein de l’Europe et avec des pays tiers revêtent également de l’importance pour le développement de l’Espace européen de la recherche.

Les objectifs des deux types de financement offerts par les actions Marie Curie s’avèrent également répondre avec pertinence aux besoins des organisations de recherche, des organisations de financement de la recherche et des chercheurs. Les organisations apprécient l’accès à des talents scientifiques de haut niveau (provenant de pays situés en Europe et en dehors), ce qui les aide à élargir leurs propres équipes de recherche et leur permet d’améliorer leurs résultats scientifiques ainsi que leur accès aux réseaux internationaux de connaissances et à la coopération internationale dans la recherche. En ce qui concerne les chercheurs, les objectifs des deux projets sont étroitement liés au besoin des chercheurs d’accéder à des infrastructures et réseaux de recherche de haute qualité dans tous les domaines de la recherche, de bénéficier d’un plus grand choix d'options de mobilité et de développer de nouvelles aptitudes et compétences de recherche favorisant l’avancement professionnel et l’employabilité. Ces objectifs répondent aussi au besoin d’encourager les chercheurs à rester en Europe ou à y revenir. Les objectifs des bourses internationales de l’activité 4, sont étroitement liés au besoin d’attirer en Europe des chercheurs du monde entier, en renforçant l’accès aux possibilités et budgets de recherche et en offrant des options de mobilité qui n’existeraient pas autrement. Les objectifs de cette activité sont étroitement liés au besoin de fournir aux chercheurs d’Europe un plus grand nombre de possibilités d’internationaliser leur carrière.

Les programmes COFUND enregistrent une forte participation de la part de bénéficiaires situés dans un ou deux États membres, notamment l’Espagne et l’Italie, et également en Suisse. L’une des réussites de l’instrument COFUND a été sa capacité à attirer un ensemble d’organisations européennes de financement pour gérer ses programmes, qu’il s’agisse d’établissements internationaux, d’organismes nationaux et régionaux ou d’institutions individuelles, prouvant la pertinence de l’objectif d’encourager des effets structurants. Dans certains États membres, les structures de gouvernance et les règles et réglementations

4 En ce sens qu’il est nécessaire de soutenir à la fois l’infrastructure et le capital humain pour la recherche et de l’innovation.
institutionnelles peuvent entraver la participation aux programmes COFUND, par exemple en raison de la fragmentation parmi les organisations candidates potentielles, de la réserve limitée de chercheurs et d'installations de recherche, de l'existence d'un système alternatif ou encore si les règles de financement réduisent l'attrait des bourses COFUND.

**Efficacité et utilité**

À l'heure actuelle, tout prouve qu'en général l’activité 2 (y compris COFUND) et l’activité 4 du programme « Personnes » atteignent leurs objectifs ; par conséquent, la capacité de recherche de l'UE s'en trouve renforcée grâce à une augmentation de la qualité et du nombre de chercheurs.

Les activités 2 et 4 des actions Marie Curie soutiennent l’évolution de carrière des chercheurs expérimentés en multipliant les possibilités de mobilité, de travail avec de grands groupes de recherche et d’acquisition de compétences et capacités nouvelles ou renforcées. Les résultats scientifiques de chercheurs individuels et d’organisations d’accueil sont renforcés, et le développement de réseaux d’échange de connaissances à long terme est facilité. Les chercheurs européens sont encouragés à revenir en Europe ou à y rester, tandis que l’activité 4 (bourses internationales) attire des chercheurs de l’étranger qui viennent augmenter ce potentiel. Le taux de participation des femmes est satisfaisant. L’octroi de bourses individuelles au titre des actions Marie Curie concerne essentiellement l’enseignement supérieur.

Actuellement, les activités n’offrent pas de possibilités d’acquérir des expériences intersectorielles ou multisectorielles, étant donné la rareté des perspectives de mobilité entre les organisations privées et publiques. Notre étude porte à croire que l’acquisition et/ou l’amélioration des compétences pluridisciplinaires ne sont pas généralisées. Néanmoins il s’agit d’un domaine complexe qui dépend de la définition qui est donnée au terme pluridisciplinarité, et la situation variera d’un domaine de recherche à l’autre.

Un examen plus approfondi est nécessaire pour savoir dans quelle mesure l’instrument COFUND cherche à compléter l’activité 2 ou bien à s’engager à soutenir les chercheurs qui relèveraient autrement de l’activité 1 des actions Marie Curie. Une dimension des programmes COFUND s’attache à soutenir les jeunes chercheurs, ce qui cadre avec l’objectif COFUND concernant les chercheurs qui viennent d’obtenir leur doctorat, mais pas avec l’objectif général de l’activité 2.

L’efficacité n’est pas aussi manifeste en ce qui concerne le nombre de chercheurs obtenant une bourse relevant de l’activité 2 après une interruption de carrière. D’après les résultats de notre enquête, seule une minuscule proportion de boursiers se dit être dans cette situation. Il est cependant important de se demander si les programmes de mobilité internationale sont appropriés pour ceux qui réintègrent le marché du travail après une interruption de carrière. Nous n’avons pas connaissance d’éléments d’appréciation suggérant qu’il s’agit d’un problème important dans l’UE et sommes donc dans l’incapacité d’évaluer l’efficacité de la performance de l’activité 2 à cet égard.

L’une des questions à laquelle cette évaluation cherche à répondre est de savoir si les règles d’éligibilité des organisations aux programmes COFUND sont correctement définies. De manière générale, nous considérons qu’elles le sont. La gestion par des universités éminentes de leurs propres programmes COFUND apparaît comme une tendance émergente peut-être inattendue, mais rien ne permet de penser...
qu'elle nuit au programme dans son ensemble ; cependant, si cette tendance se poursuivait, la possibilité d'un déséquilibre du programme COFUND en faveur des universités devrait être prise en considération (à la lumière des effets structurants plus importants que peuvent créer les approches regroupant plusieurs parties prenantes et la participation d'organismes régionaux, nationaux ou internationaux). Rien ne permet de penser, en outre, que l'ouverture du programme COFUND aux entreprises commerciales apporterait des avantages importants ; cette approche comporterait toutefois certains risques. Bien que de nombreuses parties prenantes affirment que l'ouverture du programme aux entreprises commerciales apporterait un certain nombre d'avantages, nous estimons que les coûts qu'entraînerait la modification du programme à cet effet risquent d'excéder les bénéfices et qu'il faudrait donc envisager en premier lieu d'autres moyens de favoriser la mobilité dans le secteur privé.

Un nombre d'effets imprévus ont été observés dans le cadre du programme COFUND : le degré de variation et d'innovation relativement élevé dans la mise en œuvre des programmes ; l'utilisation répandue de subsides à montant fixe au lieu de contrats de travail, en particulier au cours des premières années du programme (une tendance qui semble cependant s'être inversée plus récemment) ; la participation d'un certain nombre d'universités individuelles en tant que bénéficiaires (et hôtes) du programme COFUND, mentionnée ci-dessus.

Tous les programmes COFUND répondent aux critères de sélection et règles de mise en œuvre en vigueur, dont on peut dire qu'ils permettent un degré de liberté relativement élevé. Ce n'est pas nécessairement négatif si l'on tient compte des principes de décentralisation qui étayent COFUND.

**Efficience et rentabilité**

D'une manière générale, le budget attribué aux activités 2 et 4 des actions Marie Curie semble approprié – la quantité et la qualité des résultats et les taux de succès pour les bourses individuelles semblent être satisfaisants, étant donné le besoin d'obtenir un juste équilibre entre la réception d'un nombre adéquat de candidatures et le maintien de la réputation d'excellence du programme.

Les données sur les coûts unitaires portent à croire qu'en moyenne la rémunération des titulaires d'une bourse individuelle est légèrement supérieure à celle des boursiers COFUND – environ 80 000 € par année de bourse pour une bourse individuelle typique de deux ans par rapport à environ 70 000 € par année de bourse pour une bourse COFUND (chiffres basés sur un coût total auquel l'UE apporte une contribution de 40 %). En moyenne, les conditions d'emploi des titulaires d'une bourse individuelle sont également légèrement meilleures, et ces derniers bénéficient donc, en général, de meilleures conditions de travail. Cette différence s'explique par plusieurs facteurs, dont des effets géographiques (concentration de bourses individuelles dans les pays où la vie est plus chère par exemple) et la prévalence relative d'indemnités dans le cadre des programmes COFUND, ce qui fait baisser le niveau moyen de rémunération.

Le financement accordé aux chercheurs pour leurs frais de subsistance se fait sous forme de contrats de travail (salaires) ou de subsides à montant fixe (accompagnés en règle générale par le remboursement des coûts sociaux). L'utilisation de contrats de travail présente certains avantages, qui sont associés aux principes des actions Marie Curie visant à favoriser une amélioration des conditions de travail. En pratique, les subsides à montant fixe sont relativement rares au sein des programmes de bourses individuelles et sont utilisées dans environ un tiers des bourses COFUND approuvées lors des trois premiers appels (dont environ la moitié concerne des bourses de mobilité sortante). Cependant, une baisse de la tendance des
subsides à montant fixe est manifeste pour l’appel 2011. L’utilisation de subsides à montant fixe découle de trois facteurs principaux : en ce qui concerne la mobilité sortante, les organisations de financement ont des difficultés à financer des contrats de travail en dehors de leur propre pays ; l’utilisation de contrats de travail n’est pas une pratique standard au sein des cadres nationaux pour des raisons juridiques/culturelles ; enfin, les organisations cherchent à réduire leurs coûts.

Nous n’avons disposé d’aucunes données comparatives en provenance d’autres programmes nous permettant d’effectuer une évaluation des frais de gestion de la DG EAC et de l’Agence exécutive pour la recherche appliqués aux activités 2 et 4 des actions Marie Curie. En 2009, la toute nouvelle Agence exécutive pour la recherche a été chargée de l’administration des bourses COFUND, accroissant la complexité des tâches à accomplir. Depuis lors, l’efficience s’est améliorée, et l’Agence exécutive pour la recherche compte actuellement, selon les dernières estimations, 4,5 personnels ETP se consacrant à la gestion et l’administration des bourses COFUND, qui seront responsables de 100 projets d’ici la fin 2012. La mise en œuvre d’un nouveau système visant à contribuer au contrôle des bourses COFUND a été entamée fin 2011.

Il s’écoule, en moyenne, près d’un an et demi entre la date limite de l’appel et la signature du contrat pour les projets approuvés. Les organisations COFUND et l’Agence exécutive pour la recherche signalent toutes que ce délai est trop long. Cependant, les parties prenantes s’accordent aussi sur le fait que, dans certains cas, cette longue procédure de négociation facilite ensuite la mise en œuvre de ces programmes en établissant un taux forfaitaire de contribution financière par boursier/anée.

Les coûts administratifs encourus par les bénéficiaires du programme COFUND peuvent être significatifs (notamment pour les nouveaux candidats et les plus petites organisations) et risquent, dans de nombreux cas, de dépasser la provision constituée dans le cadre de la contribution de l’UE. Il est cependant largement admis que les avantages justifient les coûts.

Les coûts administratifs pour les organisations d’accueil (bourses individuelles et COFUND) ne sont pas excessifs et il ne semble pas y avoir de grande différence à cet égard entre les deux modes de financement. De même, la majorité des chercheurs et organismes de recherche sont satisfaits du financement des coûts de recherche.

Impacts

Il est trop tôt pour fournir des conclusions définitives sur les impacts des programmes COFUND du fait de leur nouveauté relative. Néanmoins, un certain nombre d’informations intéressantes ont émergé et sont maintenant décrites dans les quatre volets suivants.

Impact sur l’Espace européen de la recherche

Les bourses COFUND contribuent, sur le plan quantitatif et qualitatif, au renforcement du potentiel humain de l’Espace européen de la recherche. Les améliorations quantitatives ressortent du nombre de bourses qui ont été créées et octroyées. Des améliorations qualitatives ont été signalées à la fois au niveau des titulaires d’une bourse individuelle et de leurs établissements d’accueil. Comme nous l’avons déjà précisé, il s’agit notamment de l’amélioration des compétences de recherche, des capacités de recherche et des réseaux de recherche. Les avantages sont perceptibles dans l’établissement d’accueil pendant toute la
durée de la bourse ainsi que dans les établissements qui recrutent d'anciens boursiers. Selon les données empiriques, les avantages dont bénéficie un établissement d’accueil peuvent se poursuivre au-delà de la durée de la bourse en raison des effets de réseaux positifs. Les effets des bourses individuelles sont tout aussi importants et, étant donné le profil des boursiers, peuvent s'avérer légèrement supérieurs, bien qu'il soit encore trop tôt pour en avoir aujourd’hui des preuves concrètes.

Il est également difficile d'évaluer avec certitude la mesure dans laquelle le nombre et la portée des bourses et programmes répondent aux manques de mobilité des chercheurs, étant donné l'absence de données sur l'importance de la demande non réalisée. Il est clair que les bourses représentent un moyen important de combler ces manques, tandis que les taux de succès ne suggèrent pas de déséquilibre significatif entre l’offre et la demande. Cependant, notre étude laisse à penser que la demande de bourses COFUND devrait connaître une progression dans l’avenir.

La distribution géographique des projets COFUND aura sans aucun doute des répercussions sur les schémas de mobilité, notamment en ce qui concerne l’origine des chercheurs entrants. Il est encore un peu tôt pour se prononcer de façon définitive à ce sujet. Cependant, le schéma géographique de la mobilité semble actuellement refléter le paysage général de la recherche sans biais manifestes.

**Impact sur les organisations COFUND**

L’établissement et la gestion de programmes COFUND a eu une incidence sur les procédures administratives et opérationnelles d’environ un tiers des organisations concernées, généralement impliquées dans la création de nouveaux programmes. Des effets modérés ont été ressentis, notamment une amélioration de l’ouverture à la mobilité transnationale dans la procédure de recrutement et l’utilisation d’évaluations indépendantes/par des pairs dans les processus de sélection. De légères améliorations ont également eu lieu au niveau de la transparence des procédures. De manière générale, il semble que bien que de nombreuses organisations bénéficiaires aient déjà pris des dispositions adéquates dans ces domaines, une minorité d’entre elles ont été incitées à apporter des changements afin de respecter les meilleures pratiques.

L’instrument COFUND semble aussi avoir une influence sur certains aspects stratégiques de l’administration du programme : assurance d’un environnement de recherche plus adaptés aux besoins des chercheurs, offre de contrats de travail à temps plein et amélioration des méthodes de recrutement ainsi que des systèmes d'évaluation.

Il est vraisemblable qu'un certain nombre d'aspects n'aient pas changé : l'utilisation de critères d'évaluation transparents, l’évaluation des propositions de recherche, le transfert des droits à la retraite et des critères d’égalité des chances, ce dernier facteur découlant sans doute de la validité générale des dispositions préexistantes.

**Impact sur les établissements d'accueil**

Les boursiers sont principalement accueillis dans des établissements d'enseignement supérieur et, dans une bien moindre mesure, dans des organismes de recherche publics. La proportion de boursiers COFUND et de titulaires d’une bourse individuelle accueillis dans une société privée est insignifiante (< 2 %). L’impact principal sur les organisations d’accueil est le développement des capacités de recherche
et l’accès à des chercheurs de haut niveau qu’elles n’auraient peut-être pas pu attirer normalement. Il en découle alors des résultats de recherche institutionnels plus probants et la possibilité d’avoir accès à des réseaux de connaissances mondiaux plus étendus. À première vue, l’instrument COFUND semble étendre la portée des bourses Marie Curie, la proportion de ses boursiers accueillis dans des organismes de recherche publique étant plus élevée que celle des titulaires de bourses individuelles.

Tous les établissements s’attendent à ce que l’accueil de boursiers COFUND et de titulaires de bourses individuelles ait des impacts positifs. Certains éléments laissent supposer que les boursiers ayant obtenu une bourse individuelle sont d’un niveau légèrement supérieur à ceux qui ont bénéficié d’une bourse COFUND. La différence est cependant mineure.

L’action COFUND semble avoir eu un impact positif modeste sur les procédures opérationnelles et administratives des établissements d’accueil. Par extrapolation, il semble que l’effet soit plus notable dans les organisations qui n’avaient pas accueilli de boursiers Marie Curie dans le passé. Ce fait n’est pas surprenant et porte à croire que l’effet des programmes COFUND permet d’élargir la portée des efforts visant à relever les normes dans tout l’Espace européen de la recherche.

**Impact sur les boursiers Marie Curie**

La durée moyenne entre la phase de candidature et la sélection du candidat/signature du contrat est plus longue pour les titulaires d’une bourse individuelle que pour les boursiers COFUND. Cependant, les résultats de l’étude semblent indiquer que cela n’affecte pas de manière significative la durée moyenne entre la présentation d’une candidature à une bourse et la prise de poste. Ceci peut tenir du fait que les titulaires d’une bourse individuelle sont capables de faire leurs préparatifs de déménagement pendant la phase de négociation, tandis que les boursiers COFUND peuvent uniquement faire de tels préparatifs une fois qu’ils savent que leur candidature a été acceptée.

Les dispositions contractuelles et les conditions de travail varient entre les titulaires d’une bourse individuelle et les boursiers COFUND. Les conditions de rémunération des titulaires d’une bourse individuelle ont tendance à être plus généreuses que celles des boursiers COFUND. Cette différence semble s’expliquer en partie par l’utilisation plus répandue d’indemnités, par opposition à des contrats de travail, dans certains programmes COFUND. L’octroi de subsides à montant fixe reflète des pratiques existantes dans certains programmes de cofinancement et est souvent requis en raison de la législation nationale. Cependant, de tels régimes sont moins avantageux que des contrats de travail à temps plein. Même en tenant compte du système d’indemnités, les conditions de rémunération pour les boursiers COFUND semblent moins généreuses, mais il est difficile de savoir dans quelle mesure cette différence est due au profil d’âge légèrement plus jeune des boursiers COFUND.

En termes d’accès à la formation, d’accès aux installations de recherche et de dispositions de gestion, il ne semble pas y avoir de différences significatives entre les titulaires d’une bourse individuelle et les boursiers COFUND. De manière générale, les boursiers attestent de taux de satisfaction très élevés en ce qui concerne leurs conditions de travail. Les titulaires d’une bourse individuelle ont tendance à se montrer légèrement plus positifs que les boursiers COFUND dans ce domaine, mais il s’agit de différences minimes. Tous les boursiers signalent avoir accès à de nombreuses possibilités de formation. L’accès aux formations axées sur la recherche est considéré sous un jour favorable. Les titulaires d’une bourse
individuelle et les boursiers COFUND ne semblent pas accorder de l’importance aux formations concernant des activités comme les droits de propriété intellectuelle et l’esprit d’entreprise.

Bien qu’il soit encore un peu trop tôt pour tirer des conclusions sur la contribution positive des bourses individuelles et COFUND au développement de la carrière des chercheurs, les données empiriques abondent en ce sens. Les chercheurs estiment, en général, que leur bourse a eu et continue d’avoir un effet bénéfique. L’établissement de parallèles avec des boursiers de programmes antérieurs laisse supposer qu’ils ont raison.

**Valeur ajoutée**

L’objectif de haut niveau visant au soutien de la mobilité transnationale (dans le contexte de la contribution au développement du principal espace de recherche mondial dans le cadre du renforcement de la compétitivité de l’UE) est atteint par l’activité 2 des actions Marie Curie. Dans ce contexte, un élément fondamental de cet objectif consiste à utiliser les actions Marie Curie pour renforcer la sensibilisation et la réactivité au besoin d’offrir aux chercheurs expérimentés des conditions de travail attrayantes.

La mise en œuvre d’actions Marie Curie à l’échelle de l’UE (bourses individuelles et COFUND) offre une valeur ajoutée européenne plus forte que si de telles politiques étaient entreprises par les États membres séparément, principalement en raison de la rentabilité et des économies d’échelle réalisées en adoptant la même approche stratégique et un système de gestion commun et en raison de l’ouverture du programme en termes de domaines de recherche. En outre, les actions Marie Curie ont de plus fortes chances d’acquérir un niveau de visibilité accru si elles sont mises en œuvre au plan européen. Il vaut mieux prendre des mesures pour lutter contre la fragmentation, parallèlement au développement de l’Espace européen de la recherche, par le biais d’un programme à l’échelle européenne plutôt qu’en employant un ensemble d’programme nationaux.

L’instrument COFUND s’est avéré présenter un atout supplémentaire pour les bourses individuelles Marie Curie. Il a en effet amélioré la dimension internationale d’un certain nombre de programmes de bourses nationaux et régionaux par des moyens qui n’existent pas pour les actions d’octroi de bourses individuelles. Il semble également que les programmes COFUND permettent à un nouveau groupe de chercheurs de bénéficier de possibilités de mobilité internationale qui ne leur étaient pas offertes au titre des programmes Marie Curie existants. Ils aident, en particulier, ceux qui ne jouissent pas d’un large réseau de contacts personnels et qui justifient d’une expérience internationale limitée, en mettant à leur disposition un nouvel ensemble d’opportunités internationales.

Les bénéficiaires de programmes COFUND connaissent généralement la charte européenne du chercheur ainsi que le code de conduite pour le recrutement des chercheurs. Cette charte et ce code ont des répercussions positives car elles stimulent le changement dans certaines organisations et clarifient les procédures existantes dans d’autres. Certaines organisations sont, quant à elles, déjà en conformité. Cela permet de contribuer à l’uniformisation progressive par le haut des conditions d’emploi des chercheurs.

Cependant rien ne laisse croire que les programmes COFUND parviennent à résoudre la fragmentation des perspectives de financement en Europe. En effet, dans les cas où ils mènent à l’établissement de nouveaux programmes de financement, ils aggravent sans doute le problème au lieu de l’atténuer. En outre, rien ne permet de penser que les programmes COFUND créent des avantages plus importants pour
les chercheurs ou les organismes de recherche dans leur ensemble. Les avantages des bourses individuelles et COFUND Marie Curie semblent être largement similaires.

**Durabilité**

D’après les informations disponibles, il semble peu probable que les programmes COFUND continuent de se développer sans l’aide actuelle de l’UE. La mobilité transnationale ne deviendra pas un élément essentiel des programmes nationaux et régionaux du jour au lendemain. Cela prendra du temps.

La visibilité des programmes COFUND doit également être renforcée, notamment le fait que les boursiers reçoivent l’aide de l’UE. Il est généralement admis que l’action de cofinancement Marie Curie est très peu connue actuellement et, dans un trop grand nombre de cas, les boursiers eux-mêmes n’en ont pas clairement conscience. La visibilité des bourses individuelles est beaucoup plus importante car elle jouit d’un développement cohérent de marque depuis plus longtemps. Mais même dans le cas des bourses individuelles, beaucoup estiment que cette visibilité est plus importante dans l’UE qu’en dehors.

Dans le cadre du développement d’approches durables, il est reconnu par l’ensemble des acteurs qu’il est nécessaire de promouvoir davantage de mécanismes destinés à améliorer les pratiques. Les organisations bénéficiaires de programmes COFUND et les Points de contact nationaux ont tous fait remarquer qu’elles accueilleraient favorablement des séminaires et des événements favorisant les bonnes pratiques ayant pour but l’amélioration continue des programmes COFUND. Ce type d’initiatives pourrait être particulièrement utile pour les organisations envisageant de présenter leur première candidature.

**Recommandations**

Compte tenu des résultats et des conclusions de notre évaluation qui sont précisés ci-dessus, nous préconisons que :

1. **L’action COFUND doit être maintenue car elle apporte un complément utile aux bourses individuelles, tandis que la gamme de participants et d’approches qu’elle soutient lui procure à la fois force et flexibilité. Cependant, il importe d’envisager de mettre plus particulièrement l’accent sur les chercheurs expérimentés afin de continuer de la distinguer des autres activités relevant des actions Marie Curie qui visent d’autres groupes cibles. Il reste nécessaire d’enraciner le principe de la mobilité transnationale dans les programmes nationaux et régionaux, et la poursuite de la mise en œuvre de programmes COFUND y contribuera. Étant donné la faible visibilité des programmes COFUND, il serait bon d’envisager des mesures permettant de créer une image de marque pour mieux faire connaître ce système de bourses.**

2. **Il est recommandé de maintenir les bourses individuelles et de continuer de traiter ce système comme « la » référence. Les bourses individuelles jouissent d’une réputation prestigieuse, assurant ainsi l’excellence des candidats et renforçant le cachet international de l’Espace européen de la recherche. Cette réputation doit être protégée en garantissant le maintien de strictes normes de qualité (aux taux de réussite actuels), tandis que ce cachet international offre la possibilité d’améliorer la visibilité du programme en dehors de l'Europe.**
3. La fragmentation interne actuelle des actions Marie Curie devrait être minimisée ; le nombre d’actions individuelles donne une impression de complexité, alors qu’en pratique, elles partagent de nombreuses similarités (au niveau des groupes cibles, des procédures, des subventions, etc.). Bien que le maintien d’actions séparées soit utile à des fins de suivi, une structure d’une telle rigidité est superflue pour un programme axé sur la demande.

4. L’objectif visant à aider les chercheurs à reprendre leur carrière de recherche après une interruption occupe une place trop importante par rapport à la pratique actuelle. Il serait préférable de modifier cette approche en se concentrant sur des mesures contre la discrimination dont pourraient être victimes les candidats dans cette situation et en les encourageant, le cas échéant.

5. La DG EAC et l’Agence exécutive pour la recherche devraient chercher à simplifier les négociations menant à l’approbation finale des programmes COFUND. Il est largement admis qu’elles prennent trop longtemps, et deux solutions principales se présentent pour résoudre ce problème : simplifier la procédure (plus particulièrement les exigences concernant les informations, ce qui pourrait nécessiter la modification des règles et réglementations) et/ou augmenter les effectifs chargés de l’administration de cet élément de la gestion des programmes COFUND.

6. Il convient de suivre de près l’évolution de COFUND et des organisations à qui ce mécanisme profite. Si la demande augmente (ce qui est probable), les universités représenteront l’un des plus grands groupes potentiels de bénéficiaires, provoquant un risque d’éviction d’autres organisations ou structures qui sont davantage de nature à promouvoir des synergies entre l'UE et les pays/régions et à provoquer des effets structurants importants pour contrecarrer la fragmentation. Si une telle tendance était identifiée, des mesures pourraient être prises en modifiant les règles d’éligibilité aux programmes de travail annuels (par exemple, en obligeant les universités à former des consortiums pour présenter leurs propositions).

7. Une surveillance étroite devrait également être exercée sur les futurs domaines de recherche. Bien qu’il s’agisse d’une question décentralisée, il est possible que les panels des actions Marie Curie aient besoin d’être modifiés à l’avenir si, par exemple, la prédominance des sciences de la vie augmente plus encore ou que de nouveaux domaines émergent et nécessitent des ajustements.

8. Il conviendrait de susciter l’intérêt d’entreprises commerciales dans les actions Marie Curie et de les encourager à y participer ou leur fournir des incitations à cet effet, en étudiant d’autres systèmes de coopération entre entreprises et universités par exemple. De telles mesures pourraient contribuer à résoudre le manque actuel d’interactions plurisectorielles ou entre secteur public et privé au sein du programme, tout en tenant compte du fait que l’activité 3 des actions Marie Curie est également consacrée à la coopération avec les entreprises commerciales.

9. Il conviendrait également de mettre en œuvre des mesures pour retenir et partager les enseignements tirés des programmes COFUND, par exemple grâce à des séminaires et des événements de présentation de bonnes pratiques. Des options basées sur le Web pourraient également être envisagées, axées autour d’un outil d’auto-évaluation. De telles mesures permettraient de soutenir une amélioration continue de la qualité des programmes COFUND et s’avéreraient particulièrement utiles pour les nouveaux participants.
10. Il conviendrait d’étudier l’utilité des appellations qui sont actuellement appliquées aux différents éléments de la mobilité des activités 2 et 4 des actions Marie Curie (IEF, CIG, IOF, IIF et pour les bourses COFUND entrantes, sortantes et de réinsertion). Elles remplissent sans doute actuellement une fonction de surveillance utile à des fins de gestion, mais d’un point de vue externe, elles peuvent prêter à confusion.

11. Selon notre étude, il n’existe pas de déséquilibre marqué entre les bourses individuelles et les bourses COFUND. Dans la perspective de l’horizon 2020, la rentabilité du mécanisme COFUND pourrait être améliorée si le nombre de programmes était augmenté. Cependant, les bourses individuelles offrent une valeur ajoutée plus élevée en termes de réputation.
Zusammenfassung


Der Fokus dieser Zwischenbewertung lag dabei hauptsächlich auf einer ersten Bewertung des neuen Kofinanzierungsprogramms (COFUND), das in Maßnahme 2 eingeführt wurde. Dabei sollte erörtert werden, wie dieses funktioniert, wie es sich mit den bereits länger bestehenden Individualmaßnahmen vergleichen lässt und in welchen Punkten es sich von den diesen unterscheidet.

Die Wichtigkeit dieser Bewertung begründet sich vor allem aus der Notwendigkeit, die im Rahmen des Ratsbeschlusses 2006 eingegangenen Verpflichtungen zu überprüfen, deren Ziel die Untersuchung der vergleichenden Leistung des COFUND-Programms war, indem festgelegt wurde: „Beide Formen der Durchführung [von Maßnahme 2 des MENSCHEN-Programms] werden von Beginn an parallel laufen, wobei die Kofinanzierung anfänglich begrenzt ist, damit die erforderliche Erfahrung gewonnen werden kann. Im Verlauf des Rahmenprogramms werden die Auswirkungen der beiden Durchführungsformen bewertet; die Durchführungsmodalitäten für das restliche Programm werden ausgehend von dieser Bewertung festgelegt werden.“

Marie-Curie-Maßnahmen 2 und 4


Ziel der Individualmaßnahmen im Rahmen von Maßnahme 2 ist die Unterstützung erfahrener Forscher bei der Erweiterung ihrer Fähigkeiten bzw. dem Erwerb neuer Qualifikationen und Kompetenzen oder bei der Verbesserung der Inter-/Multidisziplinarität und/oder sektorenübergreifenden Mobilität, bei der Wiederaufnahme der Forschungskarriere nach einer Unterbrechung oder bei der (Wieder-)Eingliederung in eine längerfristige Forschungsposition in Europa nach einem aussereuropäischen Auslandsaufenthalt.

Das Ziel des COFUND-Programms in Maßnahme 2 ist die Verbesserung der transnationalen Mobilität und die Schaffung von Möglichkeiten zur Karriereentwicklung, indem EU-Fördermittel eingesetzt werden, um nationale, regionale und internationale Fördertöpfe wirksam einzusetzen. Ziel ist hierbei die Erweiterung bestehender und/oder die Schaffung neuer regionaler, nationaler oder internationaler Mobilitätsprogramme sowie die Angleichung dieser an die Mobilitätsziele der Marie-Curie-Maßnahmen. Dies wird durch die Kofinanzierung einer Reihe regionaler, nationaler oder internationaler Programme erreicht, die drei verschiedene Arten der Mobilität unterstützen: Förderung von Forschungsaufenthalten in Drittstaaten (’Outgoing Fellowships’), Forschungsaufenthalten in Mitgliedsstaaten (’Incoming Fellowships’) und Wiedereingliederung von Wissenschaftlern (’Re-Integration Grants’). Organisationen, die am COFUND-Programm teilnehmen möchten, müssen in einem der 27 Mitgliedsstaaten (EU27) oder einem der RP7-Assoziierten Länder ansässig sein5.

Um den gesamten Umfang der Maßnahmen von Förderung individueller Forscher und COFUND bewerten zu können, wurden zwei bestimmte Maßnahmen aus Maßnahme 4, ´Die Internationale Dimension`, mit einbezogen: Internationale ´Outgoing Fellowships´ und internationale ´Incoming Fellowships´.


**Bewertungsmethode**

Als Grundlage für unsere Bewertung diente eine Reihe wesentlicher Tätigkeiten:

- Datenanalysen und bürobasierte Forschungen auf Grundlage von Programm-Dokumentationen und Programmdaten.
- Online-Befragungen von Forschenden gefördert durch die Individualmaßnahmen oder durch COFUND und Gastorganisationen, in deren Rahmen Antworten von 1.380 Forschenden gefördert durch die Individualmaßnahmen, 504 Forschenden gefördert durch COFUND und 566 Gastorganisationen gesammelt wurden – mit einer Rücklaufquote von 45 %, 16 % bzw. 11 %.
- Telefonbefragungen von 44 COFUND-Empfängerorganisationen, welche eine Rücklaufquote von 90 % bei den aktiven Programmen hatten.

Die Qualität und Quantität der Ergebnisse sind insgesamt als hoch einzustufen und bieten eine solide Grundlage für relevante Schlussfolgerungen. Aufgrund der kurzen Zeitrahmens können wir hinsichtlich der Gesamtauswirkung der jeweiligen Programme nur begrenzte Schlussfolgerungen ziehen.

**Zusammenfassung der Ergebnisse**

**Leistungsstand bis heute**

Das COFUND-Programm wurde im Rahmen des Siebten Rahmenprogramms (RP7) neu eingeführt, die erste Ausschreibung wurde dabei 2007 vorgenommen. Das Budget für COFUND für den in dieser Bewertung berücksichtigten Zeitraum betrug ungefähr 215 Millionen EUR. Rechnet man Fördermittel mit ein (basierend auf einer Bezuschussung von 40 % durch die EU), kann das COFUND-Budget bis zu einem Betrag von ungefähr 540 Millionen EUR anwachsen.

Hinsichtlich der geographischen Verteilung hat sich herausgestellt, dass durch Individualmaßnahmen geförderte Forscher und Forscherinnen in 30 verschiedenen Ländern aufgenommen wurden. Mehr als ein Viertel davon befinden sich in Großbritannien und Frankreich, Spanien und Deutschland sind ebenfalls bedeutende Gastländer (zusammengenommen beinahe ein Drittel aller Forschenden). Von den übrigen Gastgeberländern beherbergen Israel, die Niederlande, Italien und die Schweiz die größte Anzahl an Forschenden. Mehr Forschende werden in Großbritannien, der Schweiz, Norwegen und Dänemark aufgenommen, als diese Länder entsenden, während sich der Sachverhalt in Mitgliedsstaaten wie Polen, Ungarn, Rumänien, Bulgarien und die Slowakei zusammen mit Spanien und Italien anders herum darstellt.

Hinsichtlich geografischer Muster von COFUND ist festzustellen, dass in 15 der 27 Mitgliedsstaaten Programme implementiert wurden. An der Spitze rangiert Spanien mit 19 COFUND-Programmen, was beinahe ein Viertel aller Programme ausmacht. Weitere Länder mit mehreren Programmen sind Italien (11), Deutschland und Frankreich (beide 8), die Republik Irland (5) sowie Belgien und Schweden (beide 4). Bis zum jetzigen Zeitpunkt wurden 11 Programme in Assoziierten Ländern gegründet, wovon allerdings insgesamt 10 in der Schweiz implementiert wurden. Das elfte Programm außerhalb der EU befindet sich in Island.

Derzeitig befinden sich durch COFUND geförderte Forscherinnen und Forscher in 24 verschiedenen Ländern und dabei vor allem in Deutschland, Frankreich, Großbritannien, Italien, Spanien und der Schweiz. Hinsichtlich der Mobilität ist dabei eine etwas stärkere Konzentration festzustellen, die sich aber grundsätzlich nicht wesentlich von der Mobilität der Individualmaßnahmen unterscheidet. Teilweise spiegelt dies die Jugendlichkeit des COFUND-Programms wider. Hinsichtlich der Nationalität der Forscher ist festzustellen, dass im Rahmen von COFUND ein erheblich größerer Anteil an Drittland-Staatsangehörigen im Vergleich zu den Individualmaßnahmen gefördert wird, was auf eine stärkere Beteiligung von chinesischen und indischen Forschern zurückzuführen ist. Die Anzahl der Teilnehmer aus EU 15 Ländern ist in beiden Programmen ungefähr gleich hoch, während die Zahl der Teilnehmer aus EU 12 und Assoziierten Ländern bei COFUND etwas geringer ausfällt.

Relevanz

Die Ziele der COFUND-Programme und der Individualmaßnahmen haben sich sowohl für die politischen Prioritäten als auch für die globalen Ziele der EU als relevant herausgestellt. Dies gilt ebenfalls für EU-Initiativen und EU-Programme im Bereich der Forschung, insbesondere hinsichtlich der Notwendigkeit, das menschliche Potenzial der EU in den Bereichen Forschung und technologische Entwicklung zu stärken. Weiterhin unterstützt dies die im Vertrag von Lissabon und Europa 2020 festgelegten Wachstumsstrategien, während die Komplementarität innerhalb von RP7 und mit wesentlichen Initiativen, wie Förderungen durch den European Research Council (ERC), Gemeinsame Technologieinitiativen (GTI), das Europäische Innovations- und Technologieinstitut (EIT) sowie Structural Funds ⁶, eine einheitliche strategische Linie im gesamten Durchführungskontext in den Bereichen Forschung und Innovationen gewährleistet. Insbesondere in Fällen, in denen sich solche Initiativen auf Forschung, Innovation, Wettbewerbsfähigkeit und Kohäsion konzentrieren, sollten Marie-Curie-Maßnahmen eine kontinuierliche Entwicklung des Humankapitals fördern, das für eine erfolgreiche Durchführung benötigt wird.


⁶ In dem Sinne, dass in den Bereichen Forschung und Innovation sowohl die Infrastruktur als auch das Humankapital gefördert werden muss.
das Bedürfnis europäischer Forscher an, mehr Möglichkeiten zu einer Internationalisierung ihrer Karrieren zur Verfügung zu haben.

COFUND verzeichnet eine starke Beteiligung von Empfängern aus einem oder zwei Mitgliedsstaat(en), insbesondere Spanien und Italien, sowie aus der Schweiz. Ein Erfolg von COFUND war die Gewinnung einer Reihe an europäischen Förderorganisationen für die Verwaltung von COFUND-Programmen, die von internationalen Instituten über nationale und regionale bis hin zu einzelnen Einrichtungen rangieren, was die Relevanz des Ziels unterstreicht, Strukturierungseffekte anzuregen. In manchen Mitgliedsstaaten können Regierungsstrukturen und institutionelle Regeln und Vorschriften gegen ein COFUND-Engagement sprechen, wenn zum Beispiel potentielle Antragsorganisationen zersplittert sind, nur eine begrenzte Anzahl an Forschern oder Forschungseinrichtungen zur Verfügung stehen, alternative Rücklagen vorhanden sind oder Regeln in Bezug auf Förderungen COFUND weniger attraktiv machen.

Wirkung und Nutzen

Zum jetzigen Zeitpunkt weist alles darauf hin, dass Maßnahme 2 (einschließlich COFUND) und Maßnahme 4 im Menschen-Programm ihre Zielvorgaben erfüllen, was eine Stärkung der Forschungskapazität der EU durch eine Verbesserung von Qualität und Quantität der Forscher darstellt.


Ein Gesichtspunkt, der näher untersucht werden sollte, ist die Frage, in welchem Ausmaß durch COFUND versucht wird, Maßnahme 2 zu ergänzen oder Forscher zu fördern, die ansonsten unter Maßnahme 1 der Marie-Curie-Maßnahmen fallen würden. Ein Bereich von COFUND widmet sich der Förderung jüngerer Forscher, was mit den COFUND-Vorgaben für Forscher direkt nach dem Abschluss der Promotion übereinstimmt, allerdings nicht das Gesamtziel von Maßnahme 2 darstellt.

Ein Bereich, in dem die Ergebnisse auf eine geringere Wirksamkeit schließen lassen, ist die Teilnahme von Forschern an Individualmaßnahmen aus Maßnahme 2 nach einer Unterbrechung ihrer beruflichen Tätigkeit. Die Ergebnisse der Umfragen lassen den Schluss zu, dass sich nur ein sehr geringer Anteil an Forschenden in einer solchen Situation befindet. Allerdings muss die wichtige Frage gestellt werden,
inwiefern internationale Mobilitätsprogramme für Menschen geeignet sind, die nach einer Unterbrechung ihrer beruflichen Tätigkeiten auf den Arbeitsmarkt zurückkehren. Uns liegen keine Hinweise darauf vor, dass dies ein wesentliches Problem in der EU darstellt, und daher können wir nicht bewerten, ob die Leistung von Maßnahme 2 in dieser Hinsicht effizient ist oder nicht.

Eine Frage, der in dieser Bewertung nachgegangen wurde, beschäftigt sich mit der Feststellung, ob die Regeln zur Teilnahmeberechtigung für teilnehmende Organisationen korrekt definiert wurden. Insgesamt kommen wir zu dem Schluss, dass dies bejaht werden kann. Der sich herausbildende Trend führender Universitäten, ihre eigenen COFUND-Programme zu verwalten, kam vielleicht etwas unerwartet, aber es liegen keine Hinweise dafür vor, dass dies zum Nachteil des Programms als Ganzem gereicht; sollte sich dieser Trend allerdings fortsetzen, muss die Möglichkeit berücksichtigt werden, dass COFUND dadurch aus dem Gleichgewicht geraten könnte (angesehens der stärkeren Strukturierungseffekte, die durch die Herangehensweise von Konsortien und der Teilnahme von regionalen/nationalen/internationalen Einrichtungen erreicht werden kann). Weiterhin liegen keine Hinweise dafür vor, dass eine Öffnung von COFUND in Richtung kommerzieller Organisationen zu wesentlichen Vorteilen führen würde, eine solche Öffnung würde aber bestimmte Risiken beinhalten. Während viele Interessengruppen die Ansicht vertreten, eine Öffnung in Richtung kommerzieller Organisationen würde einige Vorteile mit sich bringen, sind wir der Meinung, dass die Kosten einer Modifizierung des Programms wahrscheinlich die Nutzen übersteigen würden und daher zuerst alternative Möglichkeiten in Erwägung gezogen werden sollten, eine Mobilität zum Privatsektor zu erreichen.

Die Auswertungen haben eine Reihe unvorhergesehener Effekte für COFUND zu Tage gefördert, einschließlich relativ großer Unterschiede und Innovationen bei der Umsetzung von Programmen; die weitverbreitete Verwendung von Stipendienvergütungen anstelle von Anstellungsverträgen, insbesondere in den frühen Jahren des Programms (obgleich sich dieser Trend in letzter Zeit gewendet zu haben scheint); und die Teilnahme einer Reihe einzelner Universitäten als COFUND-Empfänger (und Gastorganisationen), wie oben beschrieben.


**Wirtschaftlichkeit und Kostenwirksamkeit**

Insgesamt betrachtet erscheint das den Marie-Curie-Maßnahmen 2 und 4 zugeteilte Budget angemessen – die Quantität und Qualität der Leistungen und Ergebnisse sowie die Erfolgsquoten für Individualmaßnahmen machen einen zufriedenstellenden Eindruck, angesichts der Notwendigkeit, ein Gleichgewicht zwischen dem Anwerben einer angemessenen Anzahl an Anträgen und dem Erhalt des Rufes der Exzellenz des Programms herzustellen.

Den Daten über Stückkosten kann entnommen werden, dass die Vergütung der durch Individualmaßnahmen geförderten Forschenden im Durchschnitt etwas höher liegt als die von COFUND geförderten Forschenden – ungefähr 80.000 EUR pro Forscher-Jahr für eine typische, zweijährige individuelle Beihilfe im Vergleich zu ungefähr 70.000 EUR für ein Forscher-Jahr im Rahmen von COFUND (auf Grundlage der Gesamtkosten in Fällen, in denen sich die EU zu 40 % beteiligt). Im Durchschnitt sind auch die Beschäftigungsbedingungen für Forscher und Forscherginnen in den Individualmaßnahmen etwas
besser, was grundsätzlich zu besseren Arbeitsbedingungen führt. Für diese Unterschiede gibt es eine Reihe an Gründen, einschließlich geografischer Effekte (z.B. eine Konzentration von Forschern und Forscherinnen in Ländern, in denen die Lebenshaltungskosten höher sind); und ein Übergewicht an Stipendienvergütungen bei COFUND, welche die durchschnittliche Vergütung senken.


Es lagen keine Vergleichswerte von anderen Programmen vor, um eine Bewertung der Verwaltungskosten der EAC und der Research Executive Agency (REA), auf die die Marie-Curie-Maßnahmen 2 und 4 angewendet, durchzuführen. Im Jahr 2009 wurde der neu gegründeten REA die Verantwortung für COFUND übertragen, was die Komplexität der zu erledigenden Aufgabe erhöhte. Seit diesem Zeitpunkt hat sich die Wirtschaftlichkeit verbessert und die REA hat derzeitig ein geschätztes Vollzeitäquivalent von 4,5 Beschäftigten für die Verwaltung und Leitung von COFUND, das die Verantwortung für 100 Projekte bis zum Ende von 2012 trägt. Ab Ende 2011 wird ein neues System zur Unterstützung der Kontrolle der Forscherinnen und Forschern die durch COFUND gefördert werden eingeführt.

Die durchschnittliche Zeit zwischen Ausschreibungsfrist und der Vertragsunterzeichnung genehmigter Projekte beträgt beinahe 1,5 Jahre. Sowohl COFUND-Organisationen als auch die REA berichten, dass diese Zeitspanne zu lang ist. Allerdings besteht Einigkeit darüber, dass diese langwierige Herangehensweise beim Aushandeln finanzieller Zuschüsse, auf Grundlage festgelegter Raten pro Forscher-Jahr, in manchen Fällen die spätere Umsetzung dieser Programme erleichtert.

Die Verwaltungskosten für Empfänger im Rahmen von COFUND-Programmen können erheblich sein (insbesondere für neue Teilnehmer und kleinere Organisationen) und werden in vielen Fällen die innerhalb der EU-Förderungen gemachten Rückstellungen wahrscheinlich übertreffen. Allerdings herrscht Einigkeit hinsichtlich der Tatsache, dass die Vorteile die Kosten rechtfertigen.

Die Verwaltungskosten für Gasteinrichtungen (Individualmaßnahmen und COFUND) fallen nicht zu hoch aus und es scheinen keine gravierenden Unterschiede zwischen den beiden Modalitäten zu bestehen. Gleichermaßen ist die Mehrheit der Forscher und der Forschungsorganisationen mit der Förderung von Forschungskosten zufrieden.
Auswirkungen

Zum gegenwärtigen Zeitpunkt ist es noch zu früh, um definitive Aussagen über die Auswirkungen von COFUND zu tätigen. Eine Reihe interessanter Erkenntnisse hat sich jedoch bereits angedeutet und diese werden im Folgenden in vier Dimensionen beschrieben.

Auswirkungen auf den Europäischen Forschungsraum


Im gleichen Maße ist es schwierig, mit Sicherheit zu bewerten, in welchem Ausmaß die Anzahl und der Umfang von Individualbeihilfen und Programmen eine Antwort auf die Lücken in der Mobilität der Forscher darstellen, da es an Daten über den Umfang an unrealisierter Nachfrage mangelt. Die Individualmaßnahmen verkörpern eine deutliche Antwort beim Fügen dieser Lücken und die Erfolgssquoten lassen auf kein erhebliches Missverhältnis zwischen Angebot und Nachfrage schließen. In Rahmen unserer Nachforschungen kamen wir allerdings zu dem Schluss, dass die Nachfrage nach COFUND in der Zukunft wahrscheinlich steigen wird.


Auswirkungen auf COFUND-Organisationen

sich moderate Verbesserungen eingestellt. Insgesamt gesehen entsteht der Eindruck, dass, obwohl viele Empfängerorganisationen bereits über angemessene Vorkehrungen auf diesen Gebieten verfügten, eine Minderheit zur Durchführung von Veränderungen angespornt wurde, die zum Ziel hatten, sie in Einklang mit "Best Practice" zu bringen.

COFUND scheint auch Einfluss auf bestimmte strategische Aspekte der Programmverwaltung zu haben, insbesondere hinsichtlich der Bereitstellung einer besser unterstützenden Forschungsumgebung, der Vergabe vollwertiger Anstellungsverträge an Forscher sowie einer Verbesserung von solchen Vorkehrungen

Die Veränderung einer Reihe an Aspekten war dagegen weniger wahrscheinlich, einschließlich der Verwendung transparenter Beurteilungskriterien; der Beurteilung von Forschungsvorschlägen, einer Gewährleistung der Übertragbarkeit von Pensionsansprüchen und Chancengleichheitskriterien, wobei letzteres wahrscheinlich als Folge der weitverbreiteten Angemessenheit der bereits bestehenden Vorkehrungen zu sehen ist.

Auswirkungen auf Gasteinrichtungen


Alle Einrichtungen berichten über die erwarteten positiven Auswirkungen durch die Aufnahme von durch COFUND als auch durch Individualmaßnahmen geförderten Forschern. Es bestehen gewisse Hinweise, die darauf schließen lassen, dass die Qualität der im Rahmen von Individualmaßnahmen teilnehmenden Forschern etwas höher liegt als bei COFUND-Programmen. Allerdings bewegen sich diese Unterschiede im marginalen Bereich.


Auswirkungen auf Marie-Curie-Fellows

Die durchschnittliche Zeitspanne zwischen der Bewerbungsphase und der Auswahl bzw. dem Unterzeichnen des Vertrags ist bei Individualmaßnahmen länger als bei COFUND-Programmen. Allerdings
lassen die Auswertungen der Umfragen den Schluss zu, dass dies die durchschnittliche Dauer zwischen der Bewerbung und der Aufnahme der Tätigkeit nicht wesentlich beeinträchtigt. Als eine Erklärung hierfür könnte die Tatsache dienen, dass durch Individualmaßnahmen geförderte Forscherinnen und Forscher bereits während der Verhandlungsphase Vorkehrungen für ihren Umzug treffen können, während COFUND-Bewerber diese erst anstellen können, wenn sie über den Erfolg ihrer Bewerbung informiert wurden.


Obwohl es noch zu früh ist, definitive Schlussfolgerungen darüber anzustellen, inwiefern die Teilnahme an Individualmaßnahmen oder an COFUND die Entwicklung von Forscherkarrieren unterstützt hat, ist die anekdotische Evidenz zweifelsohne positiv. Forscher sind grundsätzlich der Auffassung, dass ihre Teilnahme ihnen zum Vorteil gereicht hat und dies nach wie vor tut. Vergleiche mit Forschern, die von früheren Programmen gefördert wurden, lassen den Schluss zu, dass sie mit dieser Ansicht richtig liegen.

**Mehrwert**

Die hochrangige Zielvorgabe, transnationale Mobilität zu fördern (im Kontext einer Unterstützung der Entwicklung des weltweit größten Forschungsraums im Rahmen der Stärkung der Wettbewerbsfähigkeit der EU), wird durch Maßnahme 2 der Marie-Curie-Maßnahmen abgedeckt. Die Förderung einer verbesserten Wahrnehmung und Empfänglichkeit mittels Marie-Curie-Maßnahmen für die Notwendigkeit, erfahrenen Forschern attraktive Geschäftsbedingungen anzubieten, stellt in diesem Kontext ein wesentliches Element dar.

Insgesamt ergibt sich ein erheblicher Mehrwert für die EU, wenn bei der Durchführung von Marie-Curie-Maßnahmen (Individualmaßnahmen und COFUND) die EU und nicht nur einzelne Mitgliedsstaaten federführend sind: dafür sind vor allem die Kosteneffektivität und die Größenvorteile verantwortlich, die sich

Es wurde festgestellt, dass COFUND zu einem Mehrwert von Individualmaßnahmen im Rahmen von Marie-Curie geführt hat. Die internationale Dimension einer Vielzahl nationaler und regionaler Programme wurde durch COFUND auf Weisen verstärkt, die durch Individualmaßnahmen nicht erreicht werden können. Außerdem scheint COFUND einer neuen Gruppe an Forschern Zugang zu internationalen Mobilitätsmöglichkeiten zu eröffnen, die ihnen unter den bereits bestehenden Marie-Curie-Programmen nicht zur Verfügung standen. Vor allem bietet es Forschern, deren persönliche Netzwerke und internationalen Erfahrungen weniger stark ausgebildet sind, Zugang zu einer Reihe an internationalen Chancen und Möglichkeiten.


Zukunftsfähigkeit

Den vorhandenen Daten nach ist es wenig wahrscheinlich, dass die COFUND-Programme ohne Unterstützung seitens der EU weiter entwickelt werden. Es wird einiger Zeit bedürfen, bis transnationale Mobilität zu einem Hauptelement nationaler und regionaler Programme wird.

Auch die Sichtbarkeit von COFUND-Programmen muss verbessert werden, und hierbei insbesondere die Tatsache, dass die Forschenden von der EU gefördert werden. Es wird weitreichend anerkannt, dass der Bekanntheitsgrad der COFUND-Dimension im Rahmen von Marie-Curie zum gegenwärtigen Zeitpunkt gering ausfällt und in zu vielen Fällen war diese Tatsache nicht einmal den Forscherinnen und Forschern selbst bewusst. Die Sichtbarkeit der Individualmaßnahmen ist wesentlich besser, was auf eine längere Vorgeschichte bei der Herausbildung einer einheitlichen Markenidentität zurückgeführt werden kann. Doch auch hier waren viele der Auffassung, dass diese Sichtbarkeit innerhalb der EU stärker ist als außerhalb der EU.

Auch hinsichtlich der Entwicklung zukunftsfähiger Herangehensweisen besteht ein grundsätzlicher Konsens, der darauf abzielt, mehr Mechanismen zu Verbesserung von Praktiken entwickeln zu müssen.
Empfängerorganisationen von COFUND und Nationale Kontaktstellen haben durchweg ihr Interesse an Seminaren und Veranstaltungen für bewährte Praktiken kundgetan, die auf eine kontinuierliche Verbesserung der Programmstandards von COFUND abzielen. Dies könnte vor allem für solche Organisationen von großem Vorteil sein, die über eine erstmalige Teilnahme am Programm nachdenken.

Empfehlungen

Angesichts der oben dargestellten Ergebnisse dieser Bewertung und den daraus folgenden Schlüssen sprechen wir die folgenden Empfehlungen aus:


2. Die Individualmaßnahmen sollten erhalten bleiben und der Status des Programms als Goldstandard verstärkt werden. Die Individualmaßnahmen verfügen über ein renommiertes Profil, was eine hohe Qualifizierung der Bewerber gewährleistet und die Wahrnehmung der Attraktivität des Europäischen Forschungsraums auf internationaler Ebene fördert. Ersteres sollte geschützt werden, indem eine Einhaltung der Qualitätsstandards gewährleistet wird (auf ungefähr dem Niveau der gegenwärtigen Erfolgsraten), und der zweite Punkt dazu genützt werden, die Sichtbarkeit des Programms außerhalb Europas zu erhöhen.


4. Die Zielvorgabe, Forscher nach einer Unterbrechung ihrer Tätigkeit beim Wiedereinstieg zu unterstützen, orientiert sich zu stark an der momentanen Praxis und diese Herangehensweise sollte dahingehend modifiziert werden, sicherzustellen, dass sich in einer solchen Position befindende Bewerber keiner Diskriminierung ausgesetzt sehen, und es sollte, wo dies angemessen erscheint, ermutigend agiert werden.

5. GDEAC und die Research Executive Agency sollten Anstrengungen unternehmen, die Verhandlungsprozesse zu rationalisieren, die zur endgültigen Bewilligung von COFUND-Programmen führen. Es besteht weitgehende Einigkeit darüber, dass dieser Prozess zu langwierig ist, und es bieten sich zwei hauptsächliche Lösungen an – erstens, indem das Verfahren vereinfacht wird (insbesondere
die Informationsanforderungen – was zu Veränderungen der Regeln und Vorschriften führen könnte; und/oder zweitens, indem die Personalressourcen in dem Verwaltungsbereich von COFUND erhöht werden, der für diese Angelegenheiten zuständig ist.

6. Es sollte ein wachsames Auge darauf geworfen werden, wer von COFUND profitiert. Sollte die Nachfrage steigen (was wahrscheinlich ist), stellen Universitäten eine der größten Gruppen potentieller Profiteure dar, und es besteht die Gefahr, dass diese andere Organisationen oder Strukturen an den Rand drängen, die Synergien zwischen der EU und nationalen/regionalen Ebenen mit größerer Wahrscheinlichkeit fördern würden und die erhebliche Strukturierungseffekte hinsichtlich einer Lösung von Zersplitterungsproblemen beisteuern könnten. Sollte ein solcher Trend erkannt werden, könnte diesem mittels veränderter Teilnahmeregeln begegnet werden (z.B. indem für Universitäten vorgeschrieben wird, dass sie Anträge in einem Konsortium mit anderen einreichen müssen).

7. Auch zukünftige Forschungsfelder sollten weiterhin im Blickfeld behalten werden. Obwohl dies eine dezentralisierte Angelegenheit darstellt, könnte es passieren, dass zum Beispiel Marie-Curie-Ausschüsse zukünftig modifiziert werden müssen, wenn beispielsweise die Vorherrschaft der Biowissenschaften weiter zunimmt oder sich neue Forschungsfelder auftun, die Berichtigungen notwendig machen könnten.


1.0 Introduction

Purpose and scope of the evaluation

In January 2011 the European Commission (DG EAC) appointed ECORYS to carry out an interim evaluation of Marie Curie Actions under the FP7 PEOPLE programme - focusing on Lifelong Training and Career Development activities (Individual Fellowships and co-funding mechanism), with reference to Individual Fellowships funded under Activity 4 (international dimension).

The Terms of Reference are presented in Annex 1. The particular focus of this interim evaluation was to conduct a first assessment of the new COFUND modality, to explore how it is working, how it compares with the longer established Individual Fellowships modality and what differences there are. The overarching objectives of the evaluation\(^7\) were to provide a:

- **retrospective assessment** (quantitative and qualitative) of the implementation of the two modalities (Individual Fellowships and the co-funding mechanism) in Activity 2 'Lifelong Training and Career Development' during the period 2007-2010, including an analysis of the degree to which the objectives of the different actions have been achieved.

- **prospective assessment** of how the implementation of 'life-long learning and career development of researchers' aspects can be improved, including an examination of the strengths and weaknesses of the current implementation modalities.

The aims of the evaluation are to:

- present a qualitative and quantitative assessment of the implementation of the two modalities in Activity 2 'Life-long training and career development' during the years 2007-2010, including an analysis of the degree to which the objectives of the different actions have been achieved.

- examine the strengths and weaknesses of the current implementation modalities and provide recommendations on how the 'life-long training and career development' aspects for researchers can be improved.

The Council Decision was particularly strong on the need to examine the comparative performance of the COFUND mechanism stipulating that: "Both implementation modes [of the People Programme Activity 2] will be run in parallel from the beginning, with the co-funding mode initially on a controlled scale allowing for the necessary experience to be gained. In the course of the Framework Programme an impact assessment of the two modes will determine the implementation modalities for the remainder of the programme." This evaluation is intended to provide an assessment of the experience gained to date.

\(^7\) As set out in Annex I of the Council Decision 973/2006
**Glossary**

For the purposes of this report and to ensure consistency with the terminology used by the European Commission, a range of key terms are defined and explained below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Marie Cure Actions (MCA)</strong></th>
<th>The FP7 PEOPLE-Marie Curie Actions programme – Activities 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MCA 2&amp;4</strong></td>
<td>Activities 2 and 4 of the PEOPLE-Marie Curie Actions programme.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Activity 2</strong></td>
<td>Lifelong training and career development dimension of the PEOPLE-Marie Curie Actions programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activity 4</strong></td>
<td>International dimension of the PEOPLE-Marie Curie Actions programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual Fellows/Fellowships</strong></td>
<td>Modality for fellowships and grants awarded directly by the European Commission/Research Executive Agency (not including COFUND fellows/fellowships).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COFUND</strong></td>
<td>The Marie Curie co-funding of national, regional and international organisations or the Marie Curie co-funding modality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COFUND programmes</strong></td>
<td>The national/regional/international programmes co-funded by the EU through MCA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COFUND beneficiaries</strong></td>
<td>Organisations implementing fellowship programmes via the COFUND modality of MCA (the legal entity identified in the grant agreement).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COFUND fellows/fellowships</strong></td>
<td>Fellowships awarded to individual researchers through co-funded programmes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MCA fellows/fellowships</strong></td>
<td>The totality of MCA fellowships targeted at experienced researchers (i.e. Individual Fellowships and those supported via the COFUND modality).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Host organisations/hosts</strong></td>
<td>Institutions or organisations hosting MCA fellows (i.e. both COFUND fellows and Individual Fellows).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>European researchers</strong></td>
<td>Those carrying out research in Europe, not necessarily EU citizens (may be Third Country nationals for example).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Associated countries</strong></td>
<td>Non-EU countries which are party to an international agreement with the Community, under the terms or on the basis of which they make a financial contribution to all or part of the Seventh Framework Programme. In the context of proposal consortia, organisations from these countries are treated on the same footing as those in the EU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Call for proposals (or &quot;call&quot;)</strong></td>
<td>An announcement, usually in the Official Journal, inviting proposals for research, training and/or transfer of knowledge activities depending on the type of Marie Curie Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CIG</strong></td>
<td>Marie Curie Career Integration Grants</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Experienced researcher</strong></td>
<td>Researchers who, at the time of the relevant deadline for submission or selection by the host organisation, depending on the action, are either in possession of a</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<tr>
<td>doctoral degree</td>
<td>irrespective of the time taken to acquire it, or have at least four years of full-time equivalent research experience, including the period of early stage research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligibility criteria</td>
<td>The minimum conditions which a proposal must fulfil if it is to be retained for evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERG</td>
<td>Marie Curie European Reintegration Grants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation criteria</td>
<td>The criteria against which eligible proposals are assessed by independent experts. The evaluation criteria are generally the same for all Marie Curie Actions, and relate to S/T quality, Training/Transfer of Knowledge, Impact, and Implementation. However, additional evaluation criteria may apply to certain calls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Summary Report (ESR)</td>
<td>The assessment of a particular proposal following the evaluation by independent experts is provided in an Evaluation Summary Report. It normally contains both comments and scores for each criterion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Framework Programme (FP)</td>
<td>Since 1984, research and innovation activities of the EU are bundled in one big programme, the Framework Programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant Agreement (GA)</td>
<td>The legal instrument that provides for Commission funding of successful proposals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEF</td>
<td>Marie Curie Intra-European Fellowships for Career Development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIF</td>
<td>Marie Curie International Incoming Fellowships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOF</td>
<td>Marie Curie International Outgoing Fellowships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRG</td>
<td>Marie Curie International Reintegration Grants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCP</td>
<td>Official representatives nominated by the national authorities to provide tailored information and advice on each theme of FP7, in the national language(s).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiation</td>
<td>The process of establishing a grant agreement between the Commission and an applicant whose proposal has been favourably evaluated, and when funds are available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal</td>
<td>Description of the planned research and training activities, information on who will carry them out, how much EU support is requested.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Countries</td>
<td>Countries which are neither EU Member States nor countries associated to FP7 (Associated countries).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threshold</td>
<td>For a proposal to be considered for funding, the evaluation scores for individual criteria must exceed certain thresholds. There is also an overall threshold for the sum of the scores.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Programme</td>
<td>A formal document of the Commission for the implementation of a specific programme that sets out the research objectives and topics to be addressed. It also contains information that is set out further in the Guide for Applicants, including the schedule and details of the calls for proposals, indicative budgets and the evaluation procedure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>European Research Area (ERA)</strong></td>
<td>The European Research Area is composed of all research and development activities, programmes and policies in Europe which involve a transnational perspective.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>European Institute of Innovation &amp; Technology (EIT)</strong></td>
<td>The EIT is an institute of the European Union established in March 2008.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>European Research Council (ERC)</strong></td>
<td>The European Union funding body that implements the Specific FP7 Programme 'Ideas'. It is part of the Seventh Research Framework Programme (FP7). The Ideas Programme supports &quot;investigator-driven&quot; research carried out across all fields by individual national or transnational teams in competition at the European level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG EAC)</strong></td>
<td>A Directorate-General of the European Commission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stipend</strong></td>
<td>A fixed and regular payment (such as a grant) which may not be taxable and/or have the same social security protection as an employment contract.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment contract</strong></td>
<td>An employment contract shall guarantee a &quot;package&quot; of pension contributions plus social security coverage made of several items, such as sickness and maternity benefits, invalidity benefits, old age benefits, survivor's benefits, benefits in respect of accidents at work and occupational diseases, unemployment benefits, family benefits, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Executive Agency (REA)</strong></td>
<td>A funding body created by the European Commission to foster excellence in research and innovation. It manages large parts of the Seventh Framework Programme for Research, Technological Development and Demonstration Activities (FP7), the main EU funding package to respond to Europe's needs in terms of jobs and competitiveness in the global knowledge economy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intersectoral</strong></td>
<td>Involving two or more sectors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interdisciplinary</strong></td>
<td>Involving two or more scientific disciplines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers</strong></td>
<td>Best practice guidelines designed to promote equal rights and obligations for individual researchers throughout Europe by specifying the roles, responsibilities and entitlements of researchers, as well as those of funders and/or employers of researchers. Seeks to ensure attractive research careers and improve employment and working conditions for European researchers. The guidelines of the Charter and Code address all European research organisations and universities, both public and private.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Panels</strong></td>
<td>Proposals are classified under eight major panels (areas of research) for organisational reasons. The main function of the separation of proposals into panels is to assist REA in selection of the best expert evaluators. However, in case of multidisciplinary proposals, experts from different panels will be invited to evaluate. Budget allocation to each scientific panel is proportional to the number of eligible proposals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The PEOPLE programme - Marie Curie Actions

1.1.1 Structure

This evaluation focuses on Activity 2 and Activity 4 of the Marie Curie Actions. Before turning to these though it is worth establishing the relationship of these Activities in the context of the EU's 7th Framework Programme (FP7) as a whole. Marie Curie Actions form the ‘People’ dimension of FP7 and are divided into 5 Activities (Figure 1.1). Each Activity is divided into a number of modalities and actions and those relating to Activities 2 and 4 are also set out in Figure 1.1. The focus of this evaluation is highlighted in Figure 1.1 below.

Figure 1.1 Marie Curie Actions and the 7th Framework Programme

Source: ECORYS adapted from ToR
Activity 2 'Lifelong Training and Career Development', contains two separate groups of funds or modalities: Individual Fellowships/grants and a co-funding scheme. Both aim to stimulate the career development of experienced researchers through new skills and competences, multidisciplinary work and inter-sectoral mobility.

The aim of the Individual Fellowships is to support the career development of experienced researchers, targeting the acquisition of new skills and competences, the enhancement of interdisciplinary and/or inter-sectoral mobility and support for researchers who are resuming a research career after a break or are re-integrating into a longer-term position in Europe after a period abroad. Specific actions include Intra-European fellowships (IEF). European Reintegration Grants (ERG) and International Reintegration Grants (IRG). The reintegration grants (ERG and IRG) aim at increasing the quantity of researchers in Europe. The European Reintegration Grant (ERG) and the International Reintegration Grant (IRG) have been replaced by one grant, the Career Integration Grant (CIG) from 2010.

COFUND aims to increase transnational mobility and career development opportunities, by using the EU contribution to leverage regional/international funds. It seeks to open up existing and/or create new regional, national and international fellowship programmes and link them to the mobility objectives of the Marie Curie Actions. Therefore, unlike in the other Marie Curie Actions it provides funding for existing or new mobility schemes, initiated either at national level or by other international bodies. COFUND aims to:

i) Mobilise the financial resources available for transnational mobility opportunities for the researchers at national and international level;

ii) Address the fragmentation of the provision of transnational mobility activities at national, regional and international level (to ensure the complementarity and cohesion of the initiatives undertaken in the field);

iii) Increase the quality of the existing offer; and

iv) Increase the number of mobile researchers.

COFUND co-finances regional, national or international programmes that support three types of mobility:

- Outgoing mobility funds for European researchers to undertake research in any country in the world (similar to IEF and IOF).
- Incoming mobility funds for non-residents of the country of the host organisation to come from anywhere in the world (comparable with IEF and IIF).
- Re-integration grants for European researchers who spent at least 3 years of research in a Third Country to establish them in a longer-term career in Europe (comparable to IRG).

Organisations applying for the COFUND scheme have to be located in the EU27 or in FP7 Associated Countries. The FP7 Associated Countries are: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Faroe Islands, FYR Macedonia, Iceland, Israel, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkey and, from 2012, Moldova. Associated Countries pay a membership fee, based on the ratio between a country’s gross national product and that of Europe, in order to be entitled to submit an unlimited number of proposals in a broad range of fields.
**Activity 4 'International Dimension’** includes the world fellowships of the programme. In order to assess the full scope of COFUND activity, two particular actions: International Outgoing Fellowships (IOF) and International Incoming Fellowships (IIF) are included in this evaluation. International Outgoing Fellowships (IOF) support the mobility of European researchers\(^8\) in the EU or outside the EU, while International Incoming Fellowships (IIF) make it possible for non-European researchers to undertake fellowships in Europe.

In practice, Activities 2 and 4 of the Marie Curie Actions can be divided into two types:

- Those which support Individual Fellowships, and
- Those which support fellowship programmes (COFUND).

The types of mobility within each of these types can also be summarised into three forms:

- That which enables a researcher to move within the EU;
- That which enables a researcher to move out of the EU; and
- That which enables a researcher to move into the EU.

**Aims and objectives of the activities**

The overarching aim for FP7 is to **contribute to the Union becoming the world's leading research area.** This requires the Framework Programme to be strongly focused on promoting and investing in world class state-of-art research, based primarily upon principle of excellence in research.\(^9\) Marie Curie Actions contribute to this by supporting researchers throughout their career development and increasing the attractiveness of Europe for researchers. This is to be achieved through\(^10\):

- Attracting more people to enter the researcher profession;
- Encouraging European researchers to stay in Europe;
- Attracting best researchers from entire world to Europe;
- Structuring research training offer and option; and
- Encouraging intersectoral mobility.

To deliver these objectives, Marie Curie Actions not only seek to fund Fellowships but also to remove barriers to transnational mobility, such as through encouraging common standards for working conditions. Transnational mobility is, of course, one of the key foundations of Marie Curie activities and a cross-cutting aim\(^11\).

Taking each of the Actions in turn we can identify a number of operational objectives which help to deliver on the more strategic objectives of the FP7 and the Marie Curie Actions as a whole.

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\(^8\) Defined as those engaged in research in Europe, including Third Country nationals where applicable.


Activity 2

1. Intra-European Fellowships for Career Development (IEF)

This action is designed to support the career development, or restart, of experienced researchers at different stages of their careers and seeks to enhance their individual competence diversification in terms of skill acquisition at multi- or interdisciplinary level and/or by undertaking intersectoral experiences. The aim is to support researchers in attaining and/or strengthening a leading independent position, e.g. principal investigator, professor or other senior position in education or enterprise. The action may also assist researchers to resume a career in research after a break.

Operational objectives:

- Support career development of experienced researchers
- Enhance competences of experienced researchers through acquisition of multi-disciplinary skills and/or multi sectoral experiences
- Resume researchers career after a break

Expected impact of the action

Rather than merely providing employment opportunities for experienced researchers, this action aims to catalyse significant development in researchers’ careers, specifically by adding different and/or complementary research competences at an advanced level, in the process of reaching and/or reinforcing a position of professional maturity or to permit them to resume a research career. Projects are therefore expected to add significantly to the career development of the best and most promising researchers active in Europe, in order to enhance and maximise their contribution to the knowledge-based economy and society.

2. Career Integration Grants (CIG)

The objective here is to reinforce the European Research Area by encouraging researchers to establish themselves in a Member State or in an Associated Country, for example after a period of mobility. The action is designed to provide the researchers who have been offered a stable position and who are considering establishing themselves in Europe, with their own research budget, thus contributing to the scientific success of their research career. The action is intended to improve considerably the prospects for the permanent integration of researchers who are taking up, for the first time, a stable post in Europe. This action should also allow the transfer of knowledge they have acquired prior to the CIG, as well as to the development of lasting co-operation with the scientific and/or industrial environment of the country from which they have moved. This action has a particular emphasis on countering European 'brain drain' to other Third Countries.
Operational objectives:

- Facilitate researchers' integration in EU through providing them with a research budget.
- Transfer of knowledge prior their take up of CIG
- Develop lasting co-operation with the scientific and/or industrial environment of the country from which they have moved

Expected impact of the action

Projects under this action are expected to contribute significantly to the reinforcement of the human research potential in the European Research Area, by helping the integration of mobile researchers into a stable research position, as well as to improve substantially the research conditions of these researchers by allocating them a research budget of their own. Moreover, the action is beneficial in terms of knowledge transfer and trans-national cooperation. Indeed, the projects provide organisations active in research in both the private and public sectors with opportunities to acquire new knowledge and experience gained by researchers during their mobility experience within or outside Europe. At the same time these researchers bring with them a network of beneficial international research collaborations.

3. Co-funding Of Regional, National and International Programmes (COFUND)

This action aims at increasing the European-wide mobility possibilities for training and career development of experienced researchers, in line with the objectives set out in the activity heading 'Life-long training and career development', thus boosting its overall impact. The co-funding action targets programmes that support the trans-national mobility of experienced researchers at different stages of their careers, including researchers shortly after having obtained a doctorate, by broadening or deepening their individual competence, in particular in terms of acquisition of multi- or interdisciplinary skills or having inter-sectoral experiences and in particular encouraging mobility between public sector organisations and private companies; to support researchers in attaining and/or strengthening a leading independent position, e.g. principal investigator, professor or other senior position in education or enterprise; integrate researchers into a research career in Member States and Associated Countries, including in their country of origin, after a mobility experience.

Operational objectives:

- Increase Europe wide mobility possibilities for training and career development of experienced researchers
- Enhance multi-disciplinary skills and competencies of experienced researchers at different stages of careers
- Provide opportunities for inter-sectoral experiences i.e. mobility opportunities between private and public sector organisations
- Support researchers in attaining and/or strengthening a leading independent position
- Integrate researchers into a research career in Member States and Associated Countries

*Expected impact of the action*

The co-funding action will, on a voluntary basis, exploit synergies between European Union actions and those at regional and national level, as well as with other actions at international level. The structuring effect and impact of the co-funding mode would be through its leverage effect on regional, national or international funding programmes that focus on the objective set up for the “life-long training and career development” component, based on individual-driven mobility. This impact is expected to extend to:

1. Enabling the relevant regional, national and international actors to contribute significantly to the development within their own setting of high quality human resources, by introducing and/or further developing the trans-national dimension of their offers, both in terms of incoming mobility (of either researchers from countries other than that of the programme, or of the return and reintegration of nationals currently abroad), as well in terms of outgoing mobility of researchers to another country.

2. Increasing the numerical and/or qualitative impact, in terms of supported researchers or working/employment conditions.

3. Combating fragmentation in terms of objectives, evaluation methods and working conditions of regional, national or international offers in this area.

**Activity 4**

1. **International Outgoing Fellowships for Career Development (IOF)**

This action aims to reinforce the international dimension of the career of European researchers by giving them the opportunity to be trained and acquire new knowledge in a high-level organisation active in research, established in another Third Country (outgoing phase). Subsequently, these researchers will return with the acquired knowledge and experience to an organisation in a Member State or associated country.

**Operational objective:**

- Provide European researcher the opportunity to receive training and acquire new knowledge in high-level organisations based outside Europe

*Expected impact of the action*

The projects under this action are to contribute to significant steps/changes in the careers of the best and most promising European researchers, specifically adding different and/or complementary research competences at an advanced level, in the process of reaching and/or reinforcing a position of professional maturity, by exposing them to a research training experience outside Europe. Projects are expected to add significantly to the career development of European researchers while, by means of the
return phase, their experience and knowledge acquired as well as the contact-network built up outside Europe is used to the benefit of the development of the European knowledge-based economy and society.

2. International Incoming Fellowships (IIF)

This action aims to reinforce the research excellence of the Member States and the Associated Countries through knowledge sharing with incoming top-class researchers active in another Third Country to work on research projects in Europe, with the view to developing mutually beneficial research co-operation between Europe and another Third Country. It aims to encourage these researchers to plan their period of international mobility within the framework of a coherent professional project and thus enhances the possibility of future collaborative research links with European researchers and organisations active in research in their future research career.

If, before the incoming phase, the researcher was active in one of the International Cooperation Partner Countries, the possibility is provided to assist the researcher to return to this country, thus contributing to the establishment of sustainable cooperation between these countries and European organisations.

**Operational objectives:**

- Facilitate knowledge transfer between European and Third Country researchers through attracting top-class researchers to Europe
- Develop research cooperation between Europe and Third Countries

**Expected impact of the action**

Projects under this action will add to the research excellence in both the public and private sectors in Member States and associated countries, due to the sharing and application of new knowledge transferred and developed by highly qualified researchers embedded in the European research effort. At the same time the projects will constitute a nuclei for future research relations at international level, which will be beneficial in the context of the development of the European knowledge-based economy and society.

Table 1.1 below shows the objectives of each constituent action alongside the expected impact of the projects within the action.

**Table 1.1 Objectives and expected impacts of Marie Curie Actions (Activity 2 and Activity 4)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Expected Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lifelong Training and Career Development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intra-European Fellowship (IEF)</td>
<td>Support the career development of experienced researchers at different stages of their careers.</td>
<td>The projects under this action aim to catalyse significant development in researchers’ careers, specifically by adding different and/or complementary research competences at an advanced level, in the process of reaching and/or reinforcing a position of professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>Expected Impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
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<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-24 months</td>
<td>Assist experienced researchers in (re)integration into a research career after a trans-national mobility experience within 'Marie Curie Actions'.</td>
<td>Projects under this action are expected to contribute significantly to &quot;brain circulation&quot; in the European Research Area, thereby providing research organisations in both private and public sectors with opportunities to benefit from the knowledge and experience gained by researchers during their initial mobility experience,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Reintegration Grant (ERG) 24-48 months</td>
<td>Reinforce the attractiveness of Europe by encouraging European researchers who have carried out research outside Europe for at least 3 years, to re-integrate in a Member State or in an Associated Country in order to contribute to European research and transfer the knowledge they have acquired in a Third Country, by offering them the opportunity to capitalise in Europe on their experience.</td>
<td>The projects under this action are expected to reinforce contacts with European researchers abroad to strengthen the potential of Europe, to establish more international research collaboration and the possibility of re-attracting researchers who have left Europe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Reintegration Grants (IRG) 36-48 months</td>
<td>Co-funding of regional/ national/ international programmes</td>
<td>Increase the European-wide mobility possibilities for training and career development of experienced researchers, in line with the objectives set out in the activity heading Lifelong Training and Career Development thus boosting its overall impact. The COFUND action targets programmes that support the trans-national mobility of experienced researchers at different stages of their careers. The COFUND action will exploit synergies on a voluntary basis between European Union actions and those at regional and national level, as well as with other actions at international level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COFUND 24-48 months (up to 60 months from 2011)</td>
<td>Reinforce the research excellence of the Member States and the Associated Countries through knowledge sharing with incoming top-class researchers active in another Third Country to work on research projects in Europe, with the view to developing mutually beneficial research co-operation between Europe and another Third Country.</td>
<td>The projects under this action will add to the research excellence in both the public and private sectors in Member States and Associated Countries, due to the sharing and application of new knowledge transferred and developed by highly qualified researchers embedded in the European research effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Dimension</td>
<td>Reinforce the international dimension of the career of European researchers by giving them the opportunity to be trained and acquire new knowledge in a</td>
<td>The projects under this action are to contribute to significant steps/changes in the careers of the best and most promising European researchers, specifically adding different and/or complementary research competences at an advanced level, in the process of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>Expected Impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-36 months</td>
<td>Third Country, high-level research organisation.</td>
<td>reaching and/or reinforcing a position of professional maturity, by exposing them to a research training experience outside Europe.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: People Work Programme 2007 and 2011

1.1.2 Evolution of Marie Curie Actions

Before we turn to the implementation of Activities 2 and 4 it is also useful to place the activities being evaluated in the context of MCA activity in previous Framework Programmes (FP4, FP5, and FP6), in order to highlight the continuity of this strand of activity together with how it has evolved.

Successive Framework Programmes have contained a specific people dimension since the Third Framework Programme (FP3), which ran between 1990 and 1993. The first programme in FP3, called ‘Human Capital and Mobility’, focused on the training and mobility of staff and the formation of networks through financial support for four main activities. It included fellowships supporting both individual (young) researchers looking for financial support and (preferably networks of) research teams and laboratories.

The Training and Mobility of Researchers, part of FP4 (1994-1998), shifted the focus away from networks towards training and knowledge development through the international mobility of researchers. Fellowships were grouped under a ‘training through research’ programme that supported researchers seeking to deepen their knowledge by working in research facilities abroad. Support for access to research infrastructure, establishment of networks and organisation of conferences were all maintained in FP5 (1998–2002). FP5 also continued to provide support for fellowships (re-named as ‘Marie Curie Fellowships’ (MCF)) but with an additional focus on support for experienced researchers. Key components included fellowships for young researchers with at least four years of research experience; fellowships for industrial R&D institutes, that has proven competence in achievements and supervision; fellowships for experienced researchers who has proven excellence in a research area; fellowships for development of research institutes; and placement at a Marie Curie training site, on the initiative of the training site.

Reflecting the need to promote greater international linkages, MCF in FP6 (2002-2006) made it possible for researchers from Third Countries (countries that were not eligible to take part in FP6) to undertake research in the EU and for EU researchers to study for a period in a Third Country. This led both to an increase in the number of fellowships and the more detailed delineation of activities into individual grant programmes. The programme divisions were as follows:

- Marie Curie host-driven actions - fellowships organised by research organisations and networks, with the aim to structure the European overall research system.
- Marie Curie individual-driven actions - support for the career development of researchers who are developing as independent researchers, with a link between Third Countries and European countries.
- Marie Curie Excellence Promotion and Recognition - support for the promotion and recognition of European research, with a specific aim of promoting research themes in new research fields. The grants under this activity were Marie Curie excellence grants (creation and development of high
potential research teams), Marie Curie excellence awards (prizes for excellence in research) and Marie Curie Chairs (to attract world-class top researchers to Europe).

- Marie Curie return and reintegration mechanisms - support for researchers with their reintegration in their national labour market after at least two years of Marie Curie work abroad. The two granting schemes are European reintegration grants (ERG) for European researchers who work abroad longer and (IRG) for European researchers who work outside the EU.

The co-funding mechanism (or COFUND) referred to in the evaluation objectives is new to the Marie Curie Actions and was introduced within the current financial period of FP7 (2007-2013). It aims to increase transnational mobility and career development opportunities, by using the EU contribution to leverage regional, national and international funds. It seeks to open up existing and/or create new regional, national and international fellowship programmes and link them to the mobility objectives of the Marie Curie Actions. Therefore, unlike in the other Marie Curie Actions, it provides funding for existing or new mobility schemes, initiated either at regional/national level or by other international bodies. In many fundamental respects however the COFUND and Individual Fellowships mechanisms share much in common. The diagram below, adapted from the previous evaluation of MCA (carried out in 2010 and encompassing all MCAs under FP6)\(^{12}\), shows the evolution of the various component parts of MCA and equivalent measures from 1994 to the present:

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**Figure 1.2 Evolution of Marie Curie Actions**

During this same period the budget allocation for MCA and its predecessors rose from ECU 792 million for the Training and Mobility of researchers activity (6% of the total budget for FP4) to €4,750 million for the People specific programme (9% of the total budget for FP7).

1.1.3 Application processes

In considering the application process it is useful to differentiate between the different types of activities.

- For Individual Fellowships an application is made directly to the REA;
- For a COFUND fellowship the application is made to the COFUND programme authority;
- For a COFUND programme the application is made to the REA.

Thus there are essentially three application processes associated with Activity 2 and 4 – i.e. those related to Individual Fellowships, those related to COFUND programme and those related to COFUND fellowships.

With regards to Individual Fellowships, applications are submitted to the REA by Individual Fellows once the application form has been completed by themselves in collaboration with their host institution. Proposals are submitted to one of eight scientific panels - Chemistry (CHE), Social and Human Sciences (SOC), Economic Sciences (ECO), Information Science and Engineering (ENG), Environment and Geosciences (ENV), Life Sciences (LIF), Mathematics (MAT) and Physics (PHY) – and in IEF, one multi-disciplinary career restart panel, CAR\textsuperscript{13}. For each panel a ranked list is established by the evaluators. The distribution of the indicative budget of the call over the scientific disciplines will be proportional to the number of eligible proposals received in each panel. If the budget allocated to a panel exceeds the requirements of all proposals that meet the quality and eligibility threshold in that particular panel, the excess budget will be reallocated to the other panels based on the distribution as above. Equally, if the allocated funding to a panel is insufficient to fund the highest ranked proposal in that panel, the necessary budget will be transferred from the other panels based on the distribution as above, in order to ensure that the highest ranked proposal can be funded.\textsuperscript{14}

COFUND proposals are allocated to one of two panels – existing trans-national fellowship programmes (A) and new fellowship programmes with trans-national mobility (B). The distribution of the indicative budget of the call between the two panels will be proportional to the requested Community contribution of the proposals that meet the quality and eligibility threshold. For each panel a ranked list is established. Similar to Individual Fellowships, the budget for each of the panels can be reallocated to the other panel if it exceeds the requirements or is insufficient to fund the highest ranked proposal in that panel.

Once funding for COFUND programmes have been granted, the COFUND programmes implement their own application and evaluation procedures for COFUND fellowships (in accordance with their application). Notably, 30% of the evaluation criteria relates to the quality of the selection process for the

\textsuperscript{13} The CAR panel has been in place since the 2010 Work Programme

\textsuperscript{14} Work Programme 2010 – People Programme
fellows under the programme, including aspects such as transparency, composition and organisation of selection committee and criteria and methods of judging merit.

**Intervention logic**

Figure 1.3, below, summarises how the overall hierarchy of objectives may be constructed. For the purposes of this evaluation, we have split the General Objectives into High-level Objectives and Intermediate Objectives, where the former apply to EU policy in general and the latter across all Marie Curie Actions. Note that it is at the level of the Operational Objectives where the focus of MCA Activities 2 and 4 primarily lies.
Below we present an intervention logic which takes into account the hierarchy of objectives and identifies the expected short-term and long-term effects. In developing this model, the evaluator is required to make clear links between high-level global and intermediate objectives (generally reflecting wider policy goals) and operational objectives at the level of the intervention itself.
Figure 1.4 Marie Curie Actions Intervention logic

**Needs**
- Need to improve the training and career development of researchers
- Need to promote innovation and knowledge transfer through inter-sectoral collaboration
- Need to attract top-class researchers
- Need to overcome fragmentation of research in Europe along national and institutional barriers
- Need for better working and employment conditions and family circumstances of researchers

**High level objectives**
- To contribute to smart, sustainable and inclusive economy in the EU through development of the world's leading research area through investment in world class state-of-art research, based primarily upon principle of excellence in research

**Intermediate objectives**
- To strengthen research and technology potential in Europe
- To strengthen career perspectives for researchers in Europe
- To increase quality and quantity of researchers potential
- To increase cooperation with industry representatives
- To attract researchers from entire world to Europe
- To attract more people to enter research profession
- To increase the quality of researcher training
- To structure research training offer
- To encourage European researchers to stay in Europe
- To increase participation of women

**Operational objectives**
- To support experienced researchers in complementing or acquiring complementary skills and competencies
- To support experienced researchers in resuming a research career after a break
- To support researchers in becoming a research career
- To support researchers into a longer term position in Europe, including after a trans-national mobility experience
- To ensure equal opportunities in all Marie Curie Actions

**Inputs**
- Funding Marie Curie Individual Fellowships (IEF, IIF, IOF, ERG & IRG) and COFUND (Osteopil, Incoming and Re-Integration): support geographical mobility of researchers, support inter-sectoral and interdisciplinary mobility of researchers, support career progression of researchers, support high quality research, stimulate knowledge exchange, strengthening of research training

**Outputs**
- Individual fellowship programme developed and delivered, fellowships for IEF, IIF, IOF, ERG & IRG awarded; COFUND programme developed and delivered, fellowships for Outgoing, Incoming and Re-Integration awarded

**Results**
- Researchers develop professional skills and competences
- Increased levels of knowledge exchange
- Increased number of experienced researchers resuming research career
- Increased number of researchers coming to Europe and returning to Europe
- Increased number of women undertaking research career

**Intermediate impacts**
- Increased employability of researchers through equipping them with skills and competencies for the global labour market
- European added value generated as scientific knowledge and technology circulate more freely
- Increased the EU's attractiveness for doing research and enhanced global reputation of European scientific research
- Increased capacity of research organisations/institutions in fostering sustainable development
- Common EU standards adopted to create a more attractive and inclusive working environment for researchers

**Global impacts**
- Strengthened international competitiveness of European economy, productivity growth and sustainability. Strengthened and embedded European Research Area free from all forms of discrimination
This model allows us to identify the logical chain of:

**Needs:** these articulate the problems that MCA are designed to address. These may be considered to concern EU policy needs; the needs of Member States, of relevant organisations (HE institutes for example) and individual researchers.

**Objectives:** these are what activities under MCA are contributing to their achievement.

**Inputs:** these represent the resources and means applied to addressing the needs – the activities implemented through MCA 2&4 (support for mobility of experienced researchers).

**Outputs:** these are the MCA fellowships and co-funded programmes; and the activities associated with these.

**Results:** these are the immediate effects on the participants (not only individual researchers but also on institutions, organisations, Member States and Europe as a whole).

**Impacts:** finally, these represent longer term and enduring effects that relate directly to the needs and high-level objectives; contributing towards alleviating the problems faced.

**Study approach and methodology**

The evaluation questions used to guide the study and structure the findings and conclusions are listed below.

**Table 1.2 Evaluation questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relevance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. To what extent have COFUND and Individual Fellowships objectives proved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relevant to the needs of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) ERA?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) research organisations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) research funding organisations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) life-long training and career development of individual researchers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Does COFUND manage to attract a large spectrum of European funding organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in terms of:</td>
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<tr>
<td>-the geographical coverage of funded projects, mobility patterns,</td>
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<tr>
<td>-regional/national/international level of beneficiaries,</td>
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<tr>
<td>-the scientific areas covered,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-the profiles of beneficiaries (e.g. foundations, universities, national funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bodies, councils, etc.)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If not, why not? How successful is COFUND in the above defined areas compared to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Fellowships?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Is the COFUND eligibility rule for participating organisations correctly defined?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should COFUND be opened to commercial organisations?</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>What was the original rationale for the COFUND eligibility rule? Is this still valid</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>today?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. What is the potential impact of COFUND in numerical terms, e.g. how many</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>potentially eligible programmes exist (what is the size of these programmes?) and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>what is the % that have not yet applied? Would the opening of COFUND to non-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European programmes benefit the ERA?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. If the same organisation is the host institution for MC Individual Fellowships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and for fellowships awarded under co-funded programme(s), how is the participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in these two different MC mechanisms perceived by this organisation? What are the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unique opportunities e.g. in terms of access to funding, effectiveness of funding,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transparency of procedures of one each of the funding mechanisms?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. To what extent have COFUND and Individual Fellowships objectives proved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relevant to EU political priorities and global objectives (e.g. Treaty of Lisbon,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2020)?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7.</strong> To what extent has COFUND proved complementary to other EU initiatives and programmes in the field of research, training and innovation (e.g. Joint Programming, European Institute of Innovation and Technology, Structural Funds)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Added Value</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8.</strong> What is the added value of the COFUND action for the Union? For example, - does COFUND generate comparable (or higher) benefits for researchers and research organisations to Marie Curie Individual Fellowships? - what is the impact of COFUND on the fragmentation of funding opportunities in Europe? - does COFUND succeed in making national and regional funding opportunities more open to international mobility? - does COFUND contribute to the objectives of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effectiveness and Utility</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9.</strong> To what extent does Activity 2 of the People Programme achieve its general and specific objectives? - To what extent has Activity 2 enhanced the career prospects of experienced researchers? - To what extent has Activity 2 supported researchers in attaining and/or strengthening a leading independent position - To what extent has Activity 2 supported researchers to resume a research career after a break? - To what extent has Activity 2 supported researchers to (re)integrate into a longer-term research position in Europe after a trans-national mobility experience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Impact on ERA</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10.</strong> What are the intended and unintended, positive or negative, impacts of COFUND?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11.</strong> How many new fellowships and new funding schemes have been created as a result of COFUND? Do these numbers and their scope respond to the gaps in the mobility of European researchers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12.</strong> To what extent do COFUND and Individual Fellowships contribute (qualitatively and quantitatively) to the reinforcement of the human research potential in ERA?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>13.</strong> Does the geographical distribution of COFUND projects influence the mobility of individual researchers benefiting from co-funded programmes? If yes, how?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Impact on COFUND Organisations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>14.</strong> To what extent has the fact of participating in COFUND changed operational and administrative procedures of the funded organisations? a) openness of the scheme towards transnational and trans-sectoral mobility? b) organisation of the evaluation and selection process: - evaluation criteria; - independent / international peer review; - transparency and non-discrimination; - judgment of merit; - quality of application; - success rates. c) implementation of the principles set out in the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers? d) equal opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>15.</strong> To what extent have the objectives or programme modalities of the funding organisations participating in COFUND changed after being co-funded by MCA?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>16.</strong> When comparing co-funded programmes with similar programmes at national/regional/international level, how does the participation in COFUND influence the visibility of funded programmes and the organisations managing them? How successful are the co-funded programmes in attracting more and best quality researchers compared to other programmes at regional/national/international level?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Impact on Host Institutions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. What are the types and profiles of host institutions for fellows in co-funded programmes (e.g. commercial/non-commercial, universities/research institutes, where located)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Does hosting fellows from co-funded programmes affect administrative and operational procedures of host organisations? If yes, how?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Impact on individual Fellows</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. What is the average time between the application stage and the selection/signature of the contract with the individual researcher for co-funded programmes and for Individual Fellowships?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. What is the level of difficulty perceived by researchers in getting funding from MC Individual Fellowships and co-funded programmes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. What are the contractual and working conditions for researchers who participate in co-funded programmes and in the Marie Curie Individual Fellowships? Are they comparable? What are the main differences?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Do COFUND fellows receive training in transferable skills (such as management, IPR, writing of proposals, entrepreneurship, etc.) similar to Marie Curie Individual Fellows? How far does this training meet the needs of researchers and what are the satisfaction levels?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. To what extent does participation in co-funded programmes and in Individual Fellowships contribute to the development of researchers’ careers and to their employability, specifically by adding different and/or complementary research competences at an advanced level and by deepening career opportunities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Efficiency and cost-effectiveness</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Is the duration of supported projects and the size of the budget per Action (Individual Fellowships and COFUND) and per co-funded beneficiary in a call appropriate and proportionate to the overall objectives set for Individual Fellowships and COFUND?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. To what extent do the mechanisms applied in COFUND for selecting individual researchers guarantee the excellence of researchers receiving grants? How do they compare to Individual Fellowships?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. To what extent do the Commission and the Research Executive Agency (REA) fulfil the guiding role in the process of selection of researchers in co-funded programmes? What are the areas for improvement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Are the monitoring arrangements of Activity 2 appropriate? What are areas for improvement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. How cost-effective is COFUND in comparison with Marie Curie Individual Fellowships in terms of administrative costs of implementation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. What is the degree of cost-effectiveness of Activity 2 of the People Programme? Could the same results be achieved with a smaller budget? Could the use of other instruments or measures have provided better cost-effectiveness?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sustainability</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. What are the conditions under which the co-funded programmes are likely to develop further without the EU support?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evaluation Questions

31. What is the visibility of Activity 2 funding: to the general public and to researchers supported by Individual Fellowships and by co-funded programmes? Is the information about available funding in both implementation modalities of Activity 2 easily accessible, transparent and updated? Are the programmes well known in the research community?

32. Is there a need to communicate and exchange best practices among co-funded programmes at different levels (regional/national/international) and in different countries? How can the communication methods be improved?

33. How can the synergies and interaction between COFUND and Individual Fellowships and among co-funded programmes be improved?

In evaluating the implementation of the two modalities (Individual Fellowships and the co-funding mechanism) in Activity 2 'Lifelong Training and Career Development' during the period 2007-2010, we have, wherever possible, combined the two modalities to present an overall picture of Activity 2 'Lifelong Training and Career Development', although the focus of the study has largely been on providing a comparison between the two modalities. In order to fully assess the co-funding mechanism, individual-driven actions under Activity 4 'International Dimension' have also been considered as part of the evaluation.

Research tasks

Our evaluative research comprised a number of principal tasks, as set out in Table 1.3, below.

Table 1.3  Research tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE</th>
<th>Work Package No.</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STAGE 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Inception and methodological refinement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WP1</td>
<td>Inception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAGE 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Analysis of secondary data sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WP2</td>
<td>Review of monitoring and reporting data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WP3</td>
<td>Desk research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAGE 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Data collection via telephone and internet surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WP4</td>
<td>Telephone survey of COFUND beneficiaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WP5</td>
<td>Online survey of host institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WP6</td>
<td>Online survey of Individual Fellows and COFUND fellows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAGE 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>In-depth qualitative interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WP7</td>
<td>Qualitative, in-depth consultations(fellows, host organisations, COFUND beneficiary organisations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WP8</td>
<td>Wider consultation (national bodies, European Institutions, wider research community)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAGE 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Analysis and reporting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These stages and work packages are briefly explained below.

1.1.4 WP2 and WP3 Data analysis and desk research

An initial assessment of existing material set the framework for the research to be undertaken in this study. A detailed analysis was completed of the data provided by DG Education and Culture (EAC) and the Research Executive Agency (REA). This can be found in Annex 2. In addition we reviewed past evaluations, academic material relating to Marie Curie Actions and the Commission’s own published material to provide a context for our subsequent analysis. A bibliography of the main sources of documentary evidence used during the evaluation is presented at Annex 3. The results of the desk research have been incorporated into this report, in particular an intervention logic to frame the evaluation, and a framework of evaluation comparators which was used to map the results of the surveys to the Ex-post Impact study15 (see Annex 4).

1.1.5 WP4, WP5 and WP6 Surveys

Following agreement of the refined methodology, four surveys were launched in April 2011:

- Online survey of Individual Fellows;
- Online survey of COFUND fellows;
- Online survey of host organisations;
- Telephone survey of organisations operating COFUND fellowship programmes.

The survey questionnaires used are presented in Annex 5.

Contact details for invitees were obtained from EAC and REA for Individual Fellows, host organisations and COFUND beneficiaries (organisations operating COFUND programmes). Contact details for COFUND fellows were obtained through the COFUND programme representatives: in some cases these organisations preferred to administer the survey themselves, while in other cases ECORYS Survey invited COFUND fellows directly. Surveys were opened on 13 April 2011 and closed on 5 May 2011 and were therefore live for a period of three weeks. Respondents were given the option of completing the surveys in one of five languages. Reminder emails were sent out two weeks after the launch.

Table 1.4 below sets out the outcomes of the surveys. WP6 (survey of MCA fellows) in practice comprised two sub-surveys: one for Individual Fellows and another for COFUND fellows, using two separate questionnaires. Results are therefore presented for the combined fellows dataset as well as the separate data sets for each MCA modality.

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15 European Commission Research DG: Ex-post Impact Assessment Study concerning the Marie Curie Actions under the Sixth Framework Programme, September 2010.
Table 1.4 Summary of survey outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WP</th>
<th>WP4</th>
<th>WP5</th>
<th>WP6</th>
<th>WP6a</th>
<th>WP6b</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WP4</td>
<td>COFUND beneficiaries</td>
<td>telephone</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>+/-4.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP5</td>
<td>Host organisations</td>
<td>online</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>4967</td>
<td>+/-3.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP6</td>
<td>MCA fellowships</td>
<td>online</td>
<td>1884</td>
<td>7821</td>
<td>+/-1.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP6a</td>
<td>COFUND fellowships</td>
<td>online</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>3082</td>
<td>+/-3.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP6b</td>
<td>Individual Fellowships</td>
<td>online</td>
<td>1380</td>
<td>3090</td>
<td>+/-1.96%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the purposes of analysis, three datasets were constructed from the survey results for MCA fellows. This enables a comparative analysis to be made of the responses for the COFUND fellows with those of MCA fellows as a whole (i.e. the combined responses from Individual Fellows and COFUND fellows).

Detailed survey results are presented in Annex 6.

1.1.6 WP7 and WP8 Consultations

In order to examine the more qualitative dimensions of MCA mobility a series of in-depth interviews were undertaken. These consultations can be sub-divided into two broad groupings: consultations with MCA fellows, host institutions and COFUND beneficiary organisations; and wider consultations with national bodies (e.g. research funding bodies and contact points), European institutions (e.g. EAC/REA) and the wider scientific research community (e.g. external evaluators and special interest groups). In total, 126 interviews have been undertaken (through a combination of face-to-face and telephone interviews). Further detail on the mix of interviews undertaken is provided below:

- 9 COFUND beneficiary organisations;
- 14 host institutions;
- 63 MCA fellows, including 25 COFUND fellows;
- 11 national research funding bodies;
- 21 National Contact Points (NCPs), including 4 in Associated Countries;
- 3 members of the evaluation Steering Group (REA and DG EAC);

16 The sample size/population for COFUND and Individual Fellowships are based on estimated and actual fellowships respectively whilst the sample size/population for the host organisations are based on the contact details made available. Some 81 COFUND programmes have been approved, whereas only 49 of these were active at the time of the survey. Consequently, the latter has been used as the sample size/population. The sample size of COFUND fellowships have been based on the 49 programmes included in the telephone survey.

17 The general level of accuracy in the sample as been determined using a 95% confidence level. As a rule of thumb, it is desirable for the confidence interval to be 5% or less (at the 95% confidence level).

18 Calculated based on total invitees, whereas some contact details were invalid.
• 3 Chairs of evaluation panels, including two COFUND chairs;
• 2 organisations (International Research Universities Network and League of European Research Universities) from the wider research community.

The list of consultees and the topic guides used for the consultations are presented in Annex 7 and Annex 8, respectively.

Strengths and weaknesses of the approach

The terms of reference for this study request an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the methodology as it transpired in practice, in order to judge the soundness of the analysis and the conclusions to be drawn. These are summarised below. Overall, we feel that the robustness of the results are strong and that the results provide a sound basis on which to draw relevant conclusions. We are cautious, however, on the extent to which we are able to draw robust conclusions relating to the overall impact of the respective programmes owing to the short-timeframes involved.

A number of key strengths may be identified:

- The surveys of MCA fellows, host organisations and COFUND beneficiaries were very successful, achieving very high response rates and delivering a valid and statistically robust evidenced base for analysis, with high levels of confidence (margins of error less than 5%). Analysis of the survey results was also carried out to assess the representativeness of the sample, yielding good results. For example, the proportion of women surveyed is largely in line with the actual participation of women (39.5% of COFUND fellows and 36.4% of Individual Fellows, see section 2.5.2) - 37.3% of COFUND fellows interviewed (498) and 38.3% of Individual Fellows (1,375). Moreover, the responses from Individual Fellows closely reflect the distribution of fellowships by instrument.

- In-depth consultations were used to further investigate the evidence emerging from the survey results and to gather the perspectives of a wider group of stakeholders. Overall, this approach and the evidence base developed have allowed the evaluators to make a sound assessment and propose robust conclusions based on triangulation with other qualitative and quantitative data.

- We also achieved high response rates from COFUND beneficiary organisations and were also able to obtain from them contact details of COFUND fellows for the survey. Response rates were therefore satisfactory.

- Clustering interviews around visits to five countries (UK, Spain, Germany, Estonia, Denmark and Poland) allowed us to situate interviews and findings in national contexts and we were able to consult with a range of local, regional and national actors.

A number of potential weaknesses also need to be taken into account:

- The availability of data and information on COFUND hosts and fellows in particular poses a challenge, owing to the decentralised nature of the instrument and its relatively recent introduction. Indeed, given the monitoring and reporting cycle for COFUND, available data on COFUND fellows and host organisations is currently limited to less than half of the fellows funded through programmes from the 2007 call and about 10% of fellows funded through programmes from the 2008 call.
- Given the emphasis on COFUND (where of course it is largely too early to consider impacts in a strict technical sense) the findings of our evaluation largely concern results. However, an assessment of demand, motivations and expected impacts provides key insights into potential longer-term impacts, which are particularly relevant to considering the contribution of MCA to the ERA for example.

- Whilst the survey results provides a breakdown according to those hosting Individual Fellows only, those hosting both IFs and COFUND fellows in the same institution and those hosting COFUND fellows only, most of the responses are from hosts with Individual Fellowships only. This limits our ability to make any statistically significant observations resulting from direct comparisons by organisations hosting both COFUND and Individual Fellows. Moreover, responses from most hosts with COFUND fellows also tended to be from COFUND beneficiary organisations, whose perspective is likely to be different to that of COFUND host institutions not involved in programme management (particularly in the area of administrative burden).

Taking these factors into account, we are confident that the strengths highlighted give us confidence in the evaluation findings and in the validity of the conclusions drawn from the evidence. Equally, none of the weaknesses identified significantly affects the validity of our observations.
2.0 Progress to date

Introduction

In this section we present a description of the principal inputs and outputs of Activity 2 'Life-long Training and Career Development' (Individual Fellowships and the co-funding mechanism) and Activity 4 'International Dimension' (IOF and IIF). We also set out the patterns of demand and participation that lie behind the headline output figures, by exploring the dimensions including the type of beneficiary/host organisations, geographical spread, research areas and gender profile.

More detailed data and analysis is presented in Annex 2.

Inputs

2.1.1 Indicative budgets

The indicative budget for the period 2007-2010 in respect of Activity 2 'Life-long Training and Career Development' was €448 million for the Individual Fellowships and €215 million for COFUND. In addition, Activity 4 'International Dimension' (IOF and IIF) had an indicative budget of €210 million. As such, funding for COFUND is approximately a quarter of the indicative budget for MCA Fellowships (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1 Budget distribution between modalities (2007-2010)
On an annual basis, the balance between Individual Fellowships and COFUND programme funding has remained relatively consistent. There was no call for COFUND under the work programme 2009\(^\text{19}\) and thus in those years when there were calls for both Individual Fellowships and COFUND programmes, COFUND made up approximately a third of the total indicative budget for MCA Fellowships (Figure 2.2).

**Figure 2.2 Indicative budget (as presented in the work programmes)**

![Indicative budget graph](graph.png)

*Source: European Commission*

The most substantial single instrument in each call is IEF, followed by the new co-funding mechanism (Figure 2.3).

\(^{19}\) A call launched under the 2008 work programme closed on 19th February 2009. The intention was to adopt the 2010 work programme in mid-2009 and publish calls as early as possible thereafter (source: People Work Programme 2009).
Demand

The demand from researchers is buoyant, as evidenced by the near doubling of submitted proposals for Individual Fellowships between 2007 and 2010 (Table 2.1), with significant increases across both Activity 2 and 4. Evidence from interviews with NCPs indicates that the increase in demand is likely to be due to a range of factors including increased awareness of these instruments, greater interest in working abroad (mobility), and push factors such as the economic climate and the declining jobs market.

Demand for Individual Fellowships has increased to a greater extent than the number of Fellowships approved for funding. Success rates have fallen year on year from 32% in 2007 to 22% in 2010 (with an overall average of 27% for the period 2007-2010 - see Table 2.1. The quality of submitted proposals remains strong, with around three-quarters of all those submitted meeting the quality thresholds.

Table 2.1 Individual Fellowships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposals submitted</td>
<td>3,046</td>
<td>3,416</td>
<td>4,674</td>
<td>5,524</td>
<td>16,660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligible proposals</td>
<td>2,986</td>
<td>3,381</td>
<td>4,658</td>
<td>5,468</td>
<td>16,493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluated proposals</td>
<td>2,975</td>
<td>3,357</td>
<td>4,639</td>
<td>5,449</td>
<td>16,420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(excluding withdrawn)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposals above</td>
<td>2,344</td>
<td>2,700</td>
<td>3,416</td>
<td>4,161</td>
<td>12,621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>threshold</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposals provisionally</td>
<td>944</td>
<td>1,029</td>
<td>1,253</td>
<td>1,179</td>
<td>4,405</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Re-integration grants have a significantly higher success rate (on average 62%) than the other instruments. As a consequence, the re-integration grants tend to fund proposals with relatively lower scores (albeit still above the 70% quality threshold). The success rate is lowest for IIF, which indicates significant demand for fellowships from researchers in Third Countries (Table 2.2).

### Table 2.2 Individual Fellows success rates (by instrument)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Proposals submitted</th>
<th>Eligible proposals</th>
<th>Proposals provisionally approved for funding</th>
<th>Success rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IEF</td>
<td>8,715</td>
<td>8,664</td>
<td>1,965</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RG</td>
<td>2,367</td>
<td>2,285</td>
<td>1,428</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOF</td>
<td>2,122</td>
<td>2,106</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIF</td>
<td>3,456</td>
<td>3,438</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16,660</td>
<td>16,493</td>
<td>4,405</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ecorys analysis based on European Commission data

By way of comparison, a total of 7,542 proposals were submitted for Individual Fellowships under FP5 (1999-2002) of which 2,850 were selected, indicating a success rate of 41.4%. It should also be noted that Marie Curie Fellowships during FP4 and FP5 were subject to an age restriction (up to 35 years).

In addition to Individual Fellowships, there is also strong demand to develop Fellowship programmes through the new co-funding mechanism. Indeed, the funding requested in 2007 and 2010 was €120 million and €125 million respectively, against the indicative budgets of €65 million and €75 million. A total of 137 proposals have been submitted, of which virtually all were eligible (97%) and of which approaching three quarters (71%) passed the quality and eligibility threshold. Provisionally, 78 proposals have been approved for funding, representing 59% of eligible proposals (Table 2.3). From the available data it is difficult to draw hard conclusions as to whether demand is increasing as the COFUND mechanism becomes better known. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this is so and the success rate in 2011 (30%) would bear this out. However, no consistent pattern is yet present in the data.

The competition for funding appears to have been greatest in 2007, with a third of proposals passing the quality and eligibility thresholds not making the provisional list of proposals approved for funding. By contrast, all proposals meeting the quality and eligibility thresholds were approved for funding in 2008 (Table 2.3.).

The quality of proposals appear to have been relatively high across all calls, but particularly in 2007 and 2008 with almost three-quarters of proposals meeting the quality and eligibility threshold. In 2010, the quality of proposals dropped slightly with approximately a third of eligible proposals not meeting the quality threshold. Notably, 2010 was also the year that had the highest number of proposals submitted (both in absolute terms and relative to the indicative budget available) (Table 2.3.).

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21 Based on evaluated proposals. Comparable data is not available for the 2008 call.

22 Minutes from People Programme Committee and People Advisory Group Meetings, September 2011.
Table 2.3 COFUND programme success rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total indicative budget</td>
<td>€65m</td>
<td>€75m</td>
<td>€75m</td>
<td>€215m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposals submitted</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligible proposals</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposals above threshold</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposals provisionally approved for funding</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success rate (%)</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Marie Curie Proposal Evaluation Results, 2011; the sum of the individual years may not add to the total due to rounding.

With regards to the demand for COFUND fellowships, as opposed to the demand for the programmes (as set out above), comments from consultations with the COFUND beneficiary organisations indicate that the demand for COFUND fellowships is strong: many refer to numbers of applications exceeding the numbers awarded many times over and the highest success rate reported was 50%. It was also reported that the demand for fellowships has increased over time, as the programmes have become more visible in the research community.

Through the consultations with NCPs and external evaluators it has been noted that it is important to retain a relatively high quality threshold, particularly for IFs, in order to maintain its excellent reputation and a healthy level of competition for fellowships. However, success rates of less than 20% may discourage some of the best post-doctoral researchers from applying. Indeed, to ensure that excellence is enduring, researchers need sufficient incentives in the form of acceptable success rates. Furthermore, if success rates are too low, this would imply a substantial waste of research resources in failed applications23.

In terms of the size of programmes, the average EU contribution is approximately €2.6 million per programme (the maximum EU contribution was €5 million for the period 2007-2010, increasing to €10 million from 2011). However, for a quarter of programmes the EU contribution is more than €4.5 million (Figure 2.4), indicating programmes with an overall value of over €10 million including match funding. As such, a quarter of the programmes account for approaching half of the overall budget for COFUND.

Outputs

2.1.2 Number of fellowships and type of mobility

From an indicative budget of some €658 million, a total of **3,090 Individual Fellowships** have been funded through Activity 2 (IEF and RG) and Activity 4 (IIF and IOF) across 18 calls between 2007 and 2010 (Table 2.4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Mobility</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RG (IRG and ERG)</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>997</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEF</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>539</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>1393</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOF</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIF</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>739</td>
<td>1030</td>
<td>1177</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>3090</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This can be compared with FP6 where some 52% (of the 3,006 fellowships awarded) represented EIF (currently IEF) fellowships and RG (IRG and ERG) accounting for 26% of fellowships. The share of fellowships awarded through the IIF and IOF instruments is very similar to that achieved under FP6 (12% and 10% respectively). No detailed comparison is available from the other Framework Programmes, since these measures aimed at experienced researchers were part of two strands, Category 30 and Category 40. However, during FP4 and FP5, about half of the 1,800 fellowships supported were under these Categories (the vast majority under Category 30).
With regards to COFUND, a total of 81 proposals have been approved for funding (although some are still in negotiation with the REA), with such proposals estimated to support 4,731 fellowships and 7,905 fellow-years in total. Based on the information provided on the European Commission Research Participant Portal, 72 COFUND programmes have had calls for proposals, with the remaining 9 programmes still in negotiation with the REA or else having withdrawn their COFUND programme.

With regards to the type of mobility supported through the COFUND programmes, a majority (60%) of the fellowships are incoming, while approximately a third are outgoing (32%) (Table 2.5). The remaining fellowships relate to the re-integration of fellows (8%).

### Table 2.5  COFUND Fellowships: Type of mobility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>numbers</th>
<th>percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Re-integration</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incoming</td>
<td>2,858</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outgoing</td>
<td>1,494</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4,731</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: European Commission data (due to rounding the sum may not add up to the total).*

2.1.3 Duration of fellowships

The duration of Individual Fellowships varies across the various instruments, with IEF lasting 12-24 months, IOF and IIF lasting for 12-36 months (including a 12 month return phase), ERG lasting for 24-48 months and IRG funded for 36-48 months.

In practice, and based on the evidence from the surveys (Table 2.6), the duration of Individual Fellowships largely respect the rules on duration set out above, with the majority of IEF and IIF fellowships lasting for 19-24 months and the majority of IOF, IRG and ERG fellowships lasting for more than 24 months.

In terms of COFUND, the average duration of COFUND fellowships, as estimated at the application stage of individual COFUND programmes, range from 9 months to over 44 months, with an average duration of 21 months. Notably, the average duration of incoming fellowships would appear to be of slightly shorter duration (19 months) than outgoing and re-integration fellowships (22 months and 24 months respectively).

This is respected in practice with a majority of COFUND fellowships lasting for 19 months or more. However, a relatively high proportion of COFUND fellowships appear to last for 6-12 months. This is particularly the case for Incoming and Re-integration grants, suggesting that Fellowships aimed at bringing researchers into a territory are often shorter than those aimed at supporting their outward movement (almost four fifths of which last 19 months or longer).

### Table 2.6  Duration of fellowships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Individual fellows</th>
<th>IEF</th>
<th>IIF</th>
<th>IOF</th>
<th>ERG</th>
<th>IRG</th>
<th>COFUND fellows</th>
<th>Outgoing</th>
<th>Incoming</th>
<th>Re-integration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>


25 Mandatory for IOF but not always applicable to IIF.
2.1.4 COFUND beneficiary organisations

The following section examines who is managing the COFUND programmes finances (the beneficiary organisations). Approaching half of COFUND beneficiary organisations represent research funding agencies, whilst research organisations account for approximately a third of programmes. Universities account for the remainder (17%). Programmes co-funded by Universities tend to be smaller than those funded by research organisations and funding agencies (based on the estimated number of fellows and fellow-years) whilst those managed by research organisations tend to be smaller in scale, but with fellowships of a similar duration to funding agencies (Table 2.7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Funding agency</th>
<th>Research organisation</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programmes</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellowships</td>
<td>2858</td>
<td>1259</td>
<td>615</td>
<td>4731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellow-years</td>
<td>4832</td>
<td>2117</td>
<td>956</td>
<td>7905</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: European Commission

With regards to the geographical scope of the organisations involved, national organisations account for the largest share of programmes (38%), followed by regional organisations (30%) - heavily influenced by Spain and Italy, which together account for 20 programmes co-funded by regional organisations. International organisations and universities account for a similar proportion of programmes (15% and 17% respectively), although international organisations account for a greater proportion of fellows and fellow-years (20% and 21%), indicating that international organisations are responsible for larger programmes (Table 2.8).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>International organisation</th>
<th>National organisation</th>
<th>Regional organisation</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programmes</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellowships</td>
<td>945</td>
<td>2192</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>615</td>
<td>4731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellow-years</td>
<td>1651</td>
<td>3561</td>
<td>1737</td>
<td>956</td>
<td>7905</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: European Commission data

Whilst a variety of organisations have been attracted by the new co-funding mechanism, it is clear that a relatively large share of the overall budget has benefited a number of large national/ international research organisations, including the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN) – €10m and 79 fellows; and the French Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission (CEA) – €5m and 143
fellows; as well as national/international funding agencies, including European Molecular Biology Organisation (EMBO) – €9m and 340 fellows; the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) – €7m 182 fellows; the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) - €5m and 198 fellows; Alexander von Humboldt Foundation - €5m and 197 fellows; Belgian Science Policy Office - €5m and 144 fellows; and the Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (FCT) - €5m and 54 fellows.

A small number of beneficiary organisations are responsible for more than one COFUND programme, these are the University of Bern (3 COFUND programmes), NWO, CERN, EMBO, Ikerbasque Foundation for Science and the FWF (2 COFUND programmes each).

2.1.5 Host organisations

Individual Fellowships are predominantly hosted in HE institutions, followed by public research organisations. The participation of non-research based public bodies, private sector organisations and other organisations is very limited (Table 2.9). This finding is also supported by the survey evidence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.9 Share of Individual Fellowships by type of host organisation (proposals provisionally approved for funding)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher education institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public research organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private sector organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public organisations (non-research)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other organisations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Marie Curie Proposal Evaluation Results, 2011; NB: the 2007, 2008 and 2009 estimates include multiple responses from host organisations and thus is less useful in terms of determining the participatory organisations.

Based on the evidence contained in the monitoring reports submitted by the COFUND programmes to the REA and European Commission\(^\text{26}\), COFUND follows a similar pattern, with HEIs, followed by public research organisations appearing to be dominant amongst host institutions. Our survey results bear out the data for 2010 and, in fact, suggest that the proportion of Individual Fellows working in HEIs may be closer to four-fifths than three-quarters (Table 2.10). In contrast, whilst COFUND fellows are still most likely to be working in an HEI, it does seem to be more successful at supporting researchers in Research Organisations than the Individual Fellowships.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.10 Host organisations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A university or other higher education institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A large private company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A small or mid-sized private</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{26}\) Based on approximately 50% of fellows under the 2007 call and 10% of fellows under the 2008 call, representing more than 900 fellows.
2.1.6 Geographical distribution

Looking at the host countries for Individual Fellowships, the most significant feature is that the UK hosts more than a quarter of all Individual Fellowships. France, Spain and Germany also host a significant share of fellows (approaching a third as a combined group). Of the remaining host countries, Israel, the Netherlands, Italy and Switzerland host the highest number of fellows (see Figure 2.5 below). Overall, 30 countries have hosted Individual Fellows.

In addition, under the IOF action researchers are seconded to a partner organisation in a Third Country during the initial phase of the training before returning to an EU or Associated Country. Commission data shows that a high proportion of the IOF Fellows are hosted in the US (77%) followed by other English speaking countries such as Australia, Canada and New Zealand. Altogether, these four countries account for 96% of IOF researchers.

With regards to the extent to which the host countries act as net senders or receivers, it can be observed that the UK, Switzerland, Norway and Denmark are net receivers, whilst a number of New Member States such as Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Slovakia, together with Spain and Italy, can be considered as net providers of Individual Fellows (see Figure 2.5). Recent research suggests that factors that have a strong impact on mobility flows include the quality of research conducted in a country, its past reputation, the strength of its research institutions, infrastructure and salary levels for researchers.

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27 See Figure A.17 in Annex 1.
Taking a different geographical perspective, there is a tendency for Individual Fellows to find their way to capital cities or large provincial cities (such as Munich and Barcelona). Although this appears to be less true for the UK and Israel, where fellows appear to be spread across a number of cities. Overall, some 400 cities are hosting one or more Fellows but two cities are dominant - London and Paris\(^{29}\) (see Figure 2.6 below).

\(^{29}\) Note that a proportion of CNRS fellows included in the Pairs total are likely to be based at locations outside Paris.
In terms of geographical patterns of COFUND, programmes have been set up in 15 out of the 27 EU Member States. Spain is a dominant player with 19 COFUND programmes, representing almost a quarter of all programmes. Other countries with several programmes include Italy (11), Germany, France (both 8), the Republic of Ireland (5), Belgium and Sweden (both 4). All the other countries that have participated in COFUND have one or two programmes (Figure 2.7).

COFUND has also been open to Associated Countries and to date 11 programmes have been funded in these countries. However, 10 of these have been funded in Switzerland, with the remaining COFUND programme located in Iceland (Figure 2.7).

Only a few countries have received co-funding in all three calls, most notably Spain, Italy and Switzerland, with these three countries also accounting for an increasing share of co-funded programmes (approaching two-thirds of all programmes co-funded in the 2010 call) (Figure 2.7).
With the exception of the UK and the Czech Republic, all countries participating in COFUND have a programme that is led by a national organisation. By contrast, and reflecting the location of a number of international organisations, programmes being led by international organisations are concentrated in a few countries (namely, Germany, France, Switzerland, Sweden and Italy). Programmes co-funded by universities are located in seven countries, with COFUND programme run by universities being particularly prevalent in Switzerland (5 programmes), Spain (3 programmes) and France (2 programmes). Regional organisations are represented across six countries, with COFUND programmes run by regional organisations being particularly prevalent in Spain (14 programmes) and Italy (6 programmes).

Comments by the NCPs indicate that interest in some countries has been weak because it does not fit with existing structures (e.g. Norway, Israel, Denmark and the UK) and/or because of limited funding for experienced researchers (e.g. Cyprus). For example, in Norway, this is a result of the limited interest at the top level to make changes to an already established and centralised system of research funding through the Research Council of Norway (RCN); RCN tend to fund institutions as opposed to individuals. Among those countries where the interest and demand for COFUND have been particularly high (e.g. Spain and Switzerland), it has been reported by various stakeholders that there had been a very conscious effort to promote the new modality among relevant organisations, led in some cases by NCPs and proactive regional administrations. The Swiss NCP commented that EURESEARCH ‘...did a lot of promotional activity on COFUND. There was a strategy of making many small programmes and this proved highly successful.’

30 For example, the European Molecular Biology Organisation (EMBO), the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL) and the European Research Consortium for Informatics and Mathematics (ERCIM).
Early indications, based on European Commission data from 50% of programmes under Call 1 and 10% of programmes under Call 2 (representing some 900 COFUND fellowships), show that COFUND fellows have been hosted in 24 countries which can be compared with the 30 countries that have hosted Individual Fellows. Notably, whilst the UK dominates the hosting of Individual Fellows, early indications suggest that Germany is dominating in terms of hosting Marie Curie COFUND fellows.

Compared with the Individual Fellowships, there are some notable observations. Indeed, host organisations in Germany, Italy and Switzerland account for a much higher proportion of COFUND fellows than Individual Fellows, whilst host organisations in the UK accounts for a much larger proportion of Individual Fellows than COFUND fellows. Host organisations in a number of other countries, including most notably Israel, Greece, Turkey and Denmark, are also less represented (if at all) in COFUND, although their profile in the Individual Fellowships modality is significant (Figure 2.8).

**Figure 2.8 MCA fellowships by modality and country of host organisation**

![Figure 2.8 MCA fellowships by modality and country of host organisation](image)

*Source: European Commission data*

In terms of the nationality of fellows, there are also some notable observations, with Third Country nationals accounting for a significantly higher share of COFUND fellowships (27%) than Individual Fellowships (15%) (Table 2.11). To a considerable extent, this can be explained by greater participation in COFUND by Chinese and Indians, with these accounting for more than one in ten COFUND fellowships (Figure 2.9). Participation by EU15 nationals is broadly the same across both modalities, whilst participation by EU12 and Associated Country nationals is slightly lower in COFUND.
Table 2.11  MCA fellowships by modality and group of nationality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>COFUND</th>
<th>Individual Fellows</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU-15</td>
<td>63.1%</td>
<td>64.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU-12</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associated Countries</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Countries</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: European Commission data

With regard to individual nationalities, it is clear that some nationalities are not as well represented in COFUND as in the Individual Fellowship instruments, namely the Spanish, Israelis, Greeks and, to a lesser extent, Poles, Portuguese and British (Figure 2.9). In the case of the Spanish this is particularly interesting, given that Spain is responsible for nearly a quarter of the COFUND programmes. Nationalities that tend to be represented more frequently in COFUND than in the Individual Fellowship instruments, include the Austrians, the Dutch and as noted above the Indians and Chinese.

Figure 2.9  MCA fellowships by modality and nationality

Source: European Commission data

2.1.7 Research areas

In terms of the research disciplines covered by the Individual Fellowships, a third of the fellowships are funded as part of the Life Sciences (LIF) panel, followed by the Environmental and Geo-Sciences (ENV) and Physics (PHY) panels. The panels with the least awards are the Economic Sciences (ECO) and the Mathematics (MAT) panels (3% and 4% of awards respectively) (Figure 2.7).
In terms of the research areas covered by the COFUND programmes, approximately half of all programmes and fellowships represent multi-disciplinary programmes, while Life Sciences (LIFE) account for around a quarter of all programmes and fellowships. Relative to the share of programmes, the multi-disciplinary programmes and programmes under the Economic Sciences and Social Sciences and Humanities (ECO-SOC) panels account for a relatively high share of fellowships (Figure 2.11 and 2.12).

Source: European Commission data
Examining the survey responses concerning the research fields covered by the fellows, it is clear that Life Sciences (LIFE) is the dominant category for both Individual Fellowships and COFUND fellowships. As Table 2.11 shows, LIFE appears to account for around two-fifths of all fellowships. In contrast, the economic sciences and mathematics disciplines appear to be least well represented. Notwithstanding these similarities, there are some notable differences to report between Individual Fellowships and COFUND fellowships. A larger share of the COFUND Fellows are, for example, involved in life science research. In contrast, a relatively smaller share of COFUND fellows is involved in environmental and geo-sciences, mathematics and economic sciences. Overall though, there is not too much difference between the two modalities in terms of the research fields being covered.

Table 2.12 Research fields

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All MCA fellows</th>
<th>Individual Fellows</th>
<th>COFUND fellows</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIF</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHY</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOC</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHE</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENG</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENV</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAT</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECO</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of respondents</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,883</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,380</strong></td>
<td><strong>503</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ecorys Survey, 2011
Profile of MCA fellows

2.1.8 Age

Based on the evidence from the survey, it would appear that a majority of Individual Fellows and COFUND fellows are aged 30-39 years again reflecting their position as established researchers. However, the survey results also suggest that a significant proportion of COFUND fellows are aged 20-29 years (35% compared with 16% of Individual Fellows) (Table 2.13).

Table 2.13 Age profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All MCA fellows</th>
<th>Individual fellows</th>
<th>COFUND fellows</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20 - 29</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 39</td>
<td>67.1%</td>
<td>70.0%</td>
<td>58.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 49</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49 - 50</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1868</td>
<td>1372</td>
<td>496</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ecorys survey

This can be compared with the results from the evaluation of FP4 and FP5 individual fellowships\(^{31}\), which suggests that over 80% of fellows were aged 30-39 years, whilst some 18% were aged 40 years or older. Less than two percent of fellows were aged 29 years or younger. Similar statistics is not presented in the ex-post impact assessment for the 6th Framework Programme.

2.1.9 Gender

The overall target for participation by women is 40%. This is largely achieved in COFUND which has got a participation rate for women at 39.5%\(^{32}\). By comparison, the participation rate for women in Individual Fellowships is 36.4% (based on data from the Commission). This is slightly lower than for FP4 and FP5 where 40% of fellowships were awarded to women\(^{33}\), but largely in line with FP6 where 37% of fellows were women (all Marie Curie Actions)\(^{34}\). Among the various instruments, IIF is particularly dominated by male fellows, representing nearly three quarters of all fellows (Figure 2.13). Notably, women account for more than 40% of outgoing and re-integration COFUND fellows (Figure 2.14).

\(^{31}\) Impact Assessment of the Marie Curie fellowships under the 4th and 5th Framework Programmes of Research and Technological Development of the EU (1994-2002), June 2005, European Commission.

\(^{32}\) Based on data from approximately 50% of fellows in programmes funded under the 2007 call and 10% of fellows in programmes funded under the 2008 call.

\(^{33}\) Impact Assessment of the Marie Curie fellowships under the 4th and 5th Framework Programmes of Research and Technological Development of the EU (1994-2002), June 2005, European Commission.

\(^{34}\) FP6 Ex-post impact assessment
Figure 2.13 Gender profile of Individual Fellowships

Source: European Commission data

Compared with the FP6 population there is evidence that the proportion of female fellows in IEF and IOF has increased slightly (from 38% and 35% respectively). In contrast, the proportion of female researchers in IIF has fallen dramatically, from 34% in FP6.\(^{35}\)

\(^{35}\) FP6 Ex-post impact assessment, p. 111
Table 2.14 below shows that the participation rates by gender reflect differences in application rates, since success rates are broadly similar. If anything, the data shows that success rates for women are slightly higher in certain subject areas where applications from women are least common (mathematics, physics and possibly engineering). The success rate for women is also significantly higher with regards to the Career Restart (CAR) panel – 25% compared with 7% for male researchers.

Table 2.14 Summary of applications and success rates by gender (IIF, IEF and IOF)\textsuperscript{36}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Panel</th>
<th>Evaluated applications from males (% of total)</th>
<th>Evaluated applications from females (% of total)</th>
<th>Success rate for males (%)</th>
<th>Success rate for females (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHE</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECO</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENG</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENV</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIF</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAT</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHY</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOC</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{36} Data is not available for the other instruments or for COFUND.
Where data is available, the evidence suggests a very slight increase in application rates for women over time (Table 2.15).

Table 2.15 Summary of application rates by gender for Individual Fellowships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Call</th>
<th>Male %</th>
<th>Female %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>64.1</td>
<td>35.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>64.4</td>
<td>35.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>63.4</td>
<td>36.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>62.4</td>
<td>37.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ecorys analysis based on European Commission data

2.1.10 Family status

One of the aspects of this survey is to compare the comparative strengths and weaknesses of the two modalities. One area for consideration is whether the family status of researchers affects their ability to benefit from either of the modalities. Based on our survey results, the family status of COFUND and Individual Fellowships is relatively similar, demonstrating that this is not a significant consideration (Table 2.16). A slightly greater proportion of Individual Fellows report that they have children but this may be a consequence of the slightly younger age profile of COFUND Fellows rather than signalling constraints on researchers with children accessing COFUND programmes.

Table 2.16 Family status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All MCA fellows</th>
<th>Individual fellows</th>
<th>COFUND fellows</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single, with family</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single, living alone</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single with friends or sharing</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner/spouse with children</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner/spouse with no children</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone parent</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1848</td>
<td>1363</td>
<td>485</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ecorys survey

The survey results indicated that prior to taking up the fellowship 28% were living with a partner/spouse and children (30% for IFs and 23% for COFUND); 36% were living with a partner/spouse without any children (36% for IFs and 38% for COFUND), as compared with 29% who were single (28% for IFs and 32% for COFUND). In total therefore about two-thirds of fellows were living together with a spouse/partner prior to embarking on their fellowship, while the remaining third were single.
The survey also indicates that during fellowships 35% of fellows were living with a partner/spouse and children (37% for IFs and 28% for COFUND), and 28.5% with a partner/spouse and no children (22% for IFs and 30% for COFUND). Some 27.5% of women fellows were living with a partner/spouse and children, compared with 39% of men; while this situation applied to 75% of fellows in the 40-49 age group.

2.1.11 Resuming a research career after a break and enhancing inter/multidisciplinary and/or intersectoral mobility

With regards to the objectives of allowing researchers to resume a research career after a break and enhancing inter/multidisciplinary and/or intersectoral mobility, the evidence from the surveys would tend to suggest that these are currently not strongly present.

The evidence from the surveys indicates that almost all individual and COFUND fellows worked in a university or other HEI or a public research organisation before taking up the Marie Curie fellowship. Very few fellows come from a private sector background (Table 2.17).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Previous workplace</th>
<th>All MCA fellows</th>
<th>Individual fellows</th>
<th>COFUND fellows</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A university or other higher education institution</td>
<td>78.3%</td>
<td>79.3%</td>
<td>75.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A large private company</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A small or mid-sized private company</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A public research organisation</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1873</td>
<td>1375</td>
<td>498</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ecorys survey

As we saw in section 2.4.4, Individual Fellows and COFUND Fellows are to a very considerable extent hosted by universities and other higher education institutions and public research organisations. This would tend to suggest that cross-sectoral mobility is rare.

This is supported by the results of the survey of COFUND beneficiary organisations, which suggests that a majority of COFUND programmes do not include inter-sectoral and/or inter-disciplinary elements (71.1%) (see Table A6.45 in Annex 6). The sample size is not sufficient to assess any more detail, for example, in terms of whether mobility between sectors is more prevalent than between disciplines, or is more common in certain countries. For COFUND beneficiaries, promoting inter-sectoral research is referred to the least in the survey (only 21% of indications compared with 93% for the top benefits) (see Table A6.47 in Annex 6).
Summary: results of the programme

We were asked to consider a number of specific evaluation questions concerning the outputs and results Activities 2 and 4. These are now addressed.

How many new fellowships and new funding schemes have been created as a result of COFUND? Do these numbers and their scope respond to the gaps in the mobility of European researchers?

In terms of scale some 81 COFUND programmes have been approved in the period 2007-2010. These proposals are estimated to support 4,731 fellowships and 7,905 fellow-years in total. COFUND fellows are currently hosted in some 24 countries.

It is too early to assess these results in the light of the mobility gap and, in any case, the extent of demand is unknown. However, the evidence suggests that COFUND is helping to widen and deepen participation by organisations and individuals and that the two modalities are attracting different groups of experienced researchers and in that sense tapping into a wider pool of talent.

Does COFUND manage to attract a large spectrum of European funding organisations in terms of:
- the geographical coverage of funded projects, mobility patterns,
- regional/national/international level of beneficiaries,
- the scientific areas covered,
- the profiles of beneficiaries (e.g. foundations, universities, national funding bodies, councils, etc.)?

If not, why not? How successful is COFUND in the above defined areas compared to Individual Fellowships?

COFUND programmes are managed by organisations based in 15 of the 27 EU Member States and the programme shows strong engagement by organisations based in Spain, France, Germany, while interest in some countries has been weak because of a range of issues including a poor fit with existing funding and organisational structures, scarcity of match funding and/or because of a lack of appropriate co-ordinating organisations to encourage, structure and/or lead bids.

COFUND has attracted a mix of beneficiary organisations: half of the beneficiary organisations represent funding agencies, research organisations account for about one third of programmes and universities for approximately 1 in 6 programmes. National organisations account for a relatively higher share of fellowships and fellow-years, suggesting that national and international organisations are responsible for larger and longer programmes. Programmes being led by international organisations are concentrated in Germany, France, Switzerland, Sweden and Italy. Regional organisations are represented in six countries, with regional organisations being particularly prevalent in Spain (14 programmes) and Italy (six programmes).

In terms of research subjects covered, overall life sciences has the largest share of all MCA fellowships (including COFUND), accounting for two-fifths of them. However, owing to the way COFUND is constructed, programmes do focus on particular fields of research, designed to meet national, regional or local needs, which in turn implies a structuring or concentration effect.
Is the COFUND eligibility rule for participating organisations correctly defined? Should COFUND be opened to commercial organisations? What was the original rationale for the COFUND eligibility rule? Is this still valid today?

The available data on participation demonstrates that a satisfactory range of types of national, regional and international organisations are participating as beneficiaries. A significant minority of programmes are managed by single universities and single research organisations acting as COFUND beneficiaries and hosts. This does not pose any difficulties currently, but there is a question around the extent to which future demand from single universities could be met in the longer term without unbalancing the programme and reducing the likelihood of achieving wider structuring impacts.

The prevailing view amongst stakeholders is that although it is already possible under current rules, (via a not-for-profit vehicle for example) explicitly opening COFUND to commercial organisations could have a number of benefits, but that safeguards will have to be put in place to ensure private sector firms respect the principles of ensuring thematic flexibility and to avoid programmes being used as direct recruiting mechanisms. The issue here is whether the benefits of opening up COFUND would outweigh the costs and risks.

If the same organisation is the host institution for MC Individual Fellowships and for fellowships awarded under co-funded programme(s), how is the participation in these two different MC mechanisms perceived by this organisation? What are the unique opportunities e.g. in terms of access to funding, effectiveness of funding, transparency of procedures of one each of the funding mechanisms?

Very few organisations have participated in both modalities, indicating that the two mechanisms are attracting different sets of organisations; and that participation in COFUND does not appear to be duplicating participation in Individual Fellowships. The evidence we have suggests that hosting COFUND fellows has an effect on those hosting both types: in terms of greater openness to transnational and trans-sectoral mobility and a higher level of awareness of the European Charter and Code. Organisations receiving both types of MCA fellows seem more satisfied with the quality of their IFs than their COFUND fellows.
3.0 Relevance

Introduction

When we speak of relevance in the context of an evaluation we are considering whether the aims and objectives of the programme under consideration are relevant to the problems that the programme is seeking to tackle and the wider set of policies of the institution applying the intervention. However, it might also be defined as relevance to the user, which is a theme we wish to introduce here as well.

We seek to assess the extent to which the objectives of Marie Curie Actions (MCA) - Activities 2 and 4 - are relevant in the context of the wider aims and objectives of EU policies. In this regard, the degree of complementarity with other EU initiatives and programmes in the field of research, training and innovation is also assessed. We also examine the user-relevance of these Activities, considering the perspectives of researchers in receipt of Fellowships, of their host institutions and, in the case of COFUND, of beneficiary organisations.

EU strategic and policy relevance

3.1.1 Synopsis

In the context of the Marie Curie – FP7 People programme (i.e. the field of research and technological development) in 2000, the challenges Europe faces may be characterised as follows37:

- The average research effort in the Union (the differences being significant from one country to another) was only 1.8% of Europe’s GDP, as against 2.8% in the United States and 2.9% in Japan;
- This gap seemed to be increasing. The difference between total public and private expenditure on research in the US and Europe amounted to some €60 billion in 1998, as against €12 billion in 1992.
- In terms of employment researchers accounted for only 2.5 in every thousand of the industrial workforce in Europe, as against 6.7 in the United States and 6 in Japan;
- The trade balance in high tech products had thus shown a deficit of €20 billion per year in Europe over the past ten years (in 2000), and this deficit seemed to be increasing;
- The number of degree-level European students in the United States was twice as high as the number of American students at that level in Europe, and 50% of Europeans studying for a doctorate in the United States stayed there for long periods, sometimes forever;
- However, research and technology accounted for 25% to 50% of economic growth and had a strong influence on competitiveness and employment and the quality of life of Europeans;
- If technological progress creates the jobs of tomorrow, it is research which creates the jobs of the day after tomorrow. The trends in research could therefore have a negative influence on the development of employment in Europe in the years ahead.

37 COM(2000) 6 final, “Towards a European research area”.
The policy responses, which are also in effect a proxy for the wider needs that arise from these challenges, comprise the following five key components:

- Overarching EU strategies concerning European competitiveness: Lisbon 2000-2010 and Europe 2020 (2010-2020);
- The European Research Area (ERA) launched in 2000 and aimed at overcoming the problems of fragmentation, under-investment and lack of consistency of research in the EU;
- The changing role of universities, enabling them to make their full contribution to economy and society;
- The European Charter for Researchers and a Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers setting out the roles and responsibilities of researchers and their employers and funders and ways to make recruitment fairer and more transparent;
- The European Partnership for Researchers (EPR) – part of the ERA and aimed at improving career prospects for researchers in Europe, stimulating young people to embark on research careers and helping to retain European talent and attracting researchers from other world regions.

In 2010 the European Commission launched the Europe 2020 strategy establishing new strategic goals for Europe over the next decade. This places greater emphasis on knowledge and innovation, a more sustainable economy, high employment and social inclusion. In order to address the key challenges that it faces, Europe has to become more attractive for business (and citizens), implying that the manner and extent of investments, whether within or between the three components of the Knowledge Triangle, will be crucial for ensuring success in terms of productivity, competitiveness and employment. Moreover, the EU Council Conclusions of 26th May 2010 acknowledge that ‘research and innovation policy has moved up in terms of EU policy priorities and become widely recognised as a key enabler of competitiveness, productivity growth and sustainability to tackle global and societal challenges’.

The implementation of Europe 2020 aims in relation to the research and innovation field will largely be implemented through the flagship initiative ‘Innovation Union’, which aims to achieve the following objectives: make Europe into a world-class science performer; remove obstacles to innovation which currently prevent ideas reaching the market quickly; revolutionize the way public and private sectors work together, notably through Innovation Partnerships between the European institutions, national and regional authorities and business.

In fact, from 2000 the Lisbon Strategy recognised the role that research plays in ensuring the competitiveness of European economies in its overarching aim to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. In 2002, the Barcelona European Council agreed that R&D investment in the EU must be increased with the aim of approaching 3% of GDP by 2010. At around the same time, the importance of investing in research and technological development was stressed in the Commission Communication, ‘Towards a European Research Area’, which highlighted the growing gap

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38 As highlighted by the expert group undertaking the interim evaluation of FP7.
40 Such as expensive patenting, market fragmentation, slow standard-setting and skills shortages.
41 COM(2000) 6 final, “Towards a European research area”.
between Europe and the other technological powers and to achieve the transition to a knowledge-based economy.

The **European Research Area (ERA)** established the integration of Europe’s scientific and technological area as an essential condition, requiring a more coherent approach involving measures taken by the Member States, the European Union, and intergovernmental cooperation organisations. The ERA represents: “an integration of Europe’s scientific and technological area could make for the essential “critical mass” in the major areas of progress in knowledge, in particular to achieve economies of scale, to allocate resources better overall, and to reduce negative externalities due to insufficient mobility of factors and poor information for operators”.

Although universities were at the centre of these efforts, in 2003 the Commissions Communication ‘The role of the universities in the Europe of knowledge’ stated that “universities are not at present globally competitive with those of our major partners, even though they produce high quality scientific publications” and emphasised that to reach its economic and social goals **Europe needs a first-class university system**. To this end, three objectives have since been pursued simultaneously: ensuring that European universities have sufficient and sustainable resources and use them efficiently; consolidating their excellence in research and in teaching, particularly through networking; and opening up universities to a greater extent to the outside and increasing their international attractiveness.

In 2005 the Commission adopted the **European Charter for Researchers and a Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers** setting out the roles and responsibilities of researchers and their employers and funders and ways to make recruitment fairer and more transparent. Furthermore, the “scientific visa” package was adopted in 2005, which aims to allow fast-track admission and residence of Third Country researchers.

In 2008 the Commission Communication: ‘Mobilising the brainpower of Europe: enabling universities to make their full contribution to the Lisbon Strategy’ reported that there are still some gaps with other developed economies in the field of research. For example, it notes that while the EU educates more graduates in science and technology and produces more PhDs overall, it employs only 5.5 researchers per 1,000 employees, which is marginally less than Canada and South Korea, but much less than the US (9.0) and Japan (9.7). Moreover, it reports that two recent surveys found that, apart from a handful of universities in Britain, there are no European Union universities in the top 20 in the world and relatively few in the top 50; and that the rapid growth of Asian universities is now challenging Europe – and the US – in terms of doctoral candidates in science and engineering.

In a major step forward, the Commission Communication ‘Better careers and more mobility’ proposed to develop a partnership with Member States to ensure the availability of the necessary resources and to promote effective collaboration and networking. 

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42 COM(2003) 58 final “The role of the universities in the Europe of knowledge”
44 COM(2005) 152 final “Mobilising the brainpower of Europe: enabling universities to make their full contribution to the Lisbon Strategy”.
researchers. This European Partnership for Researchers (EPR) aims at improving career prospects for researchers in Europe, stimulating young people to embark on research careers and helping to retain European talent and attracting researchers from other world regions. The Partnership facilitates mobility between countries, academia and industry\textsuperscript{48} and is one of the five initiatives to create the European Research Area (ERA). Four key areas are identified for the EPR: open recruitment and portability of grants; meeting the social security and supplementary pension needs of mobile researchers; providing attractive employment and working conditions; and enhancing the training, skills and experience of researchers.

Further impetus was provided by the ERA 2020 vision adopted in 2008, which includes the following overarching objectives for the next decade: “By 2020, all players will fully benefit from the “fifth freedom” across the ERA: free circulation of researchers, knowledge and technology. The ERA provides attractive conditions and effective and efficient governance for carrying out research and investing in R&D intensive sectors in Europe. It creates significant added value by fostering healthy Europe-wide scientific competition whilst ensuring the appropriate level of cooperation and coordination”.

To reinforce the EPR, the European Commission seeks to optimize existing community instruments, including those available through the FP7 People programme encompassing the Marie Curie Actions (MCA). In particular, the European Commission are proposing a Common Strategic Framework for all EU research and innovation funding (Horizon 2020), incorporating the Framework Programme for Research and Technical Development (FP7), the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP) and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), in order to increase impact, make participation easier and more attractive and provide better value for money\textsuperscript{49}. Notably, investment in research and innovation in the next programme period (2014-2020) is expected to be significantly increased, with an overall budget of €80 billion.

3.1.2 Analysis

With reference to the Figures 1.3 and 1.4 in Section 1.4, above deriving an Intervention Logic indicates that the MCA Activity 2 and 4 Objectives are logical, internally consistent and coherent.

We now turn to relevance to the EU’s strategic and policy needs. Starting with the broad policy goals set out in Lisbon 2000-2010 and Europe 2020 (in terms of wider EU policy priorities such as sustainable economic and employment growth), to the extent that the quantity and quality of human resources contributes to ensuring success in terms of productivity, competitiveness and employment, the MCA objectives are relevant, specifically given the focus of the People programme on the need to maintain and develop a competitive edge in science and technology by improving the quantity and quality of the human capital\textsuperscript{10}. The main investment made to achieve this aim is through the Marie Curie Actions and this relevance is carried through to the Activity 2 and 4 operational objectives concerning enhancing competences, acquiring advanced skills and knowledge, integrating researchers into a research career in Europe and attracting top-class researchers from outside Europe.

\textsuperscript{48} \textit{http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/areas/researchers/researchers_en.htm}
\textsuperscript{49} COM(2011) 48 Green Paper “From Challenges to Opportunities: Towards a Common Strategic Framework for EU research and innovation funding
In terms of the flagship initiatives within the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, the objectives of the MCA can be seen to support key dimensions of the Innovation Union in particular, which “...aims to improve conditions and access to finance for research and innovation in Europe, to ensure that innovative ideas can be turned into products and services that create growth and jobs.” One of the action points within the Innovation Union is to make Europe into “a world-class science performer”. Clearly, the kind of investments in people expressed in the objectives of MCA can make a strong contribution to this goal, in particular through the operational objectives concerning enhancing skills and competences (the main focus of the operational objectives of Intra-European Fellowships for Career Development (IEFs)). MCA therefore has a significant contribution to make in terms of the human capital dimension, increased research cooperation between the public and private sectors (reflected in the Activity 2 operational objectives to provide for more inter-sectoral opportunities), and related structuring effects between the European institutions, national and regional authorities and business (an expected impact of COFUND, to be achieved by exploiting synergies between levels of activity).

More specifically, although indirectly, the objectives of the MCA are relevant in terms of supporting the 1 million new research jobs that will be needed to reach the EU R&D target of 3% (of GDP), as well as contributing the commitment to support measures to remove obstacles to mobility and cross-border cooperation, including by supporting attractive and internationally competitive employment conditions and gender balance in research careers.

While the MCA objectives also have some potential to contribute to the Youth on the Move (for example the operational objective to support career development is relevant, alongside those aimed at increasing Europe-wide mobility possibilities, providing opportunities for inter-sectoral experiences, and providing European researchers with opportunities to receive training and acquire new knowledge in high-level organisations based outside Europe), the relevance of Activities 2 and 4 is likely to be limited because of the age profile of the experienced researchers targeted. MCA Activities 2 and 4 are also relevant to the Agenda for New Skills and Jobs flagship initiatives, by supporting the promotion of learning and employment mobility and contributing to the diversification of researchers’ skills and competencies in order to support their career in academic research.

MCA objectives and activities are also very relevant to many of the key elements of the European Research Area (ERA), in particular promoting and supporting more abundant and more mobile human resources, stimulating young people’s taste for research and careers in science; and improving the attraction of Europe for researchers from the rest of the world. Indeed increased mobility and the greater interaction of research-related personnel are increasingly seen as routes to the creation of dynamic networks, improved scientific performance, improved knowledge and technology transfer, improved productivity and ultimately enhanced economic and social welfare. The relevance of MCA lies at the level of the programme (since it is a mobility programme) but is also reflected in the intermediate objectives of Activities 2 and 4 (strengthening career perspectives, increasing the quantity and quality of

50 http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index_en.cfm
51 A COFUND Operational Objective
52 Innovation Union Communication, October 2010
53 Including greater mobility of researchers and introduction of a European dimension to scientific careers; more prominence to the place and role of women in research.
researcher potential, increasing the quality and structuring of research training and increasing the participation of women). A focus on these objectives can help to address some of the main barriers to mobility in Europe including low salary levels, limited availability of research positions, restricted career opportunities, the absence of transparent and fair recruitment and promotion processes, limited access to high-quality research infrastructures and gender inequality.

Another important area where the MCA’s objectives are relevant to the goals of the ERA concerns overcoming some of the fragmentation that affects research opportunities in Europe. Importantly, the co-funding mechanism, introduced as part of the 7th Framework Programme, can be seen to have extended the relevance of the MCA to the ERA, in the sense that it aims to align and coordinate international, national and regional resources for post-doctoral researchers (60% match funding required), as well as promote collaboration and networking. By seeking to exploit synergies between EU actions and those at national and regional levels, COFUND is expected to lead to positive leverage effects on national, regional or international research funding programmes. COFUND’s relevance is also reflected in the expected impacts concerning combating fragmentation in objectives, evaluation methods and working/employment conditions. Importantly, the underlying aim of adding the COFUND mechanism to MCA as a whole is reflected in the operational objective to increase the number and range of opportunities for researcher mobility. By extending such opportunities through leveraging national, regional and international schemes, this component of MCA can add qualitatively and quantitatively to the development of the ERA.

A number of Activity 2 and 4 operational objectives are relevant to the European Partnership for Researchers (EPR), one of the key ERA initiatives, which aims at improving career prospects for researchers in Europe and helping to retain European talent and attracting researchers from other world regions. For example, the objectives concerning support for career development of experienced researchers; enhancing competences and multi-disciplinary skills of experienced researchers and (COFUND) those who have recently completed their doctorate; and supporting researchers in attaining/strengthening a leading independent position. Under Activity 4, operational objectives concerning attracting top-class researchers to Europe (specifically the IIF Action) are relevant to the EPR.

Seeking to improve the working conditions of researchers is an implementation principle set out in the People programme Decision, but not an explicit operational objective of Activities 2 and 4. This principle is addressed by reference to the framework provided by the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, which is voluntary in nature. Four key areas identified for the EPR are also reflected in Activity 2 and 4 implementation principles (meeting the social security and supplementary pension needs of mobile researchers; providing attractive employment and working conditions objectives), and operational objectives (enhancing the training, skills and experience of researchers).

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Complementarity

In terms of the complementarity of MCA, the following other regional, national and European instruments and initiatives within the ERA\textsuperscript{56} have been considered:

At the European level the 7th Framework Programme (FP7); the Structural Funds; the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP); the European Institute of Innovation & Technology (EIT); thematic priorities (including Joint Programming, the Joint Technology Initiatives (JTIs), the Lead Markets Initiative for Europe (LMI) and the European Research Council programmes. Evidence was also collected from stakeholder interviews, notably with MCA National Contact Points (NCPs) and other national level actors (national ministries and research funding councils for example).

In terms of FP7 as a whole, MCA is the implementation mechanism for the Specific Programme People. Whereas the three other specific programmes within FP7 address trans-national research co-operation on policy-led themes (the “Cooperation” programme), high-level frontier research at European level (the “Ideas” programme\textsuperscript{57}) and building research infrastructures (the “Capacities” programme); the “People” programme explicitly addresses the human capital dimension (in terms of experienced researchers for MCA Activities 2 and 4). Other elements of MCA are aimed at early-stage researchers, the industry dimension and policy support actions (Activities 1, 3 and 5 respectively). Activity 4 also includes IRSES\textsuperscript{58}, which is not included within the scope of this evaluation. There is a clear delineation between the objectives and target groups and sectors within the MCA, indicating a high degree of complementarity and consequently no evidence of overlap or duplication.

The objectives of the People programme fit logically with the other specific programmes within FP7 - the focus of “Cooperation” activity is on trans-national research projects; within “Ideas” on building new research teams to carry out frontier research, and under “Capacities” on research infrastructure. The key difference between MCA and the other FP7 specific programmes concerns its openness to “all domains of research and technological development”\textsuperscript{10}. The other specific programmes seek to align the activity supported to pre-defined themes in the case of FP7 Cooperation\textsuperscript{59}, or for ERC schemes, while open to all research areas, there is a strong emphasis on scientific excellence and frontier research (so part of the selection criteria involves a propensity to fund high-risk/high-reward research and unconventional and innovative approaches).

Given the potential for overlap between MCA and ERC, it is useful to consider the complementarity between these two mechanisms in more detail. The ERC (comprising a strategic component, the Scientific Council, and an administrative arm, the ERC Executive Agency or ERCEA) has a remit to encourage the highest quality research in Europe and operates four grant schemes: ERC Starting Grants for researcher with 2-12 years post-doctoral experience, ERC Advanced Grants (for established leaders in their field), ERC Synergy Grants (a pilot scheme for groups of excellent researchers) and ERC Proof of Concept fund (open to ERC grant-holders only). Starting Grants are for up to €2 million for up to five years and Advanced Grants are for up to €3.5 million for up to five years. In common with MCA, these

\textsuperscript{56} The ERA consists of a range of regional, national and European level instruments and initiatives that are used to support the vision of the ERA.

\textsuperscript{57} Implemented by the European Research Council (ERC)

\textsuperscript{58} International Research Staff Exchange Scheme

\textsuperscript{59} \url{http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/cooperation/home_en.html}
schemes seek to address a lack of opportunities for young researchers to develop careers and move from being under supervision to become independent in their own right.

The target groups are similar for MCA and the ERC – for example ERC Starting Grants “…support up-and-coming research leaders who are about to establish or consolidate a proper research team and to start conducting independent research in Europe.” However while MCA is a mobility scheme, ERC does not include a specific mobility requirement. Another difference is that the ERC grant is intended to support a researcher (at Principal Investigator level) to establish a research team, membership of which is typically drawn from the principal's own institution. Therefore, while it is possible to include in the new team researchers from other locations (institutions and countries) this is not the main aim. For ERC grants scientific excellence is the sole selection criteria.

While there are potential overlaps between MCA and ERC grants, resulting from similar target groups, objectives concerning career progression and openness to all research domains, the absence of an explicit requirement for trans-national mobility in the ERC schemes and explicit emphasis on building leading research teams, means this risk is not considered significant.

Joint Technology Initiatives (JTIs) are public-private partnerships which are used to implement the Strategic Research Agendas (SRAs) developed by European Technology Platforms (ETPs). The latter are sector-based and there are currently 36, organised under five themes. JTIs themselves are legal entities, with Governing Boards and staff. They are responsible for managing a series of research projects which are procured via calls for proposals. As such, their focus is more closely related to the FP7 Cooperation programme (research projects) and ERC than MCA. While the emphasis in MCA is on developing the quality and quantity of research potential, JTIs are driven by sectoral priorities and operate relatively large scale projects. Complementarity therefore appears moderate, given that JTI projects provide more opportunities for researchers to move between academia and industry, for researchers to develop their careers and given that JTIs may also help to attract researchers from all over the world, which is an aim of MCA.

The EU Lead Markets Initiative (LMI) is a series of action plans in six key areas, selected in consultation with the ETPs and intended to foster the emergence of lead markets of high societal and market value. The focus is on demand-side measures including legislation, standardisation/labelling/certification, public procurement and complementary actions such as support for business and innovation support services and financial instruments. As such, while increasing the number and quality of researchers and enhancing career progression is indirectly relevant to LMIs (insofar as the Action Plans may help to boost demand for trained researchers, technologists and managers who have benefited from MCA), given the fundamental differences between the two initiatives, there is no risk of overlap or duplication.

The EIT concept seeks to boost Europe’s innovation capacity by focusing on the better integration of activity around the knowledge triangle (where currently links between the realms of education, research and innovation are not sufficiently strong in Europe), in order to increase sustainable growth and

http://erc.europa.eu/starting-grants

61 ERC: Guide for Applicants for the Starting Grant 2012

62 Industry-led stakeholder fora charged with defining research priorities in a broad range of technology areas.


64 eHealth, protective textiles, sustainable construction, recycling, bio-based products and renewable energies.
The initiative is currently supporting three Knowledge Innovation Communities (KICs), which include a range of partners from higher education, business and public sector research bodies. Research projects are supported by KICs but again, similar to JTIs and the FP7 Cooperation programme, these may provide opportunities for experienced researchers who have been MCA beneficiaries. Equally, MCA helps to ensure a supply of experienced researchers to implement projects taken forward under these initiatives. Complementarily with MCA is therefore satisfactory.

EU Structural Funds comprise two main instruments: the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF). ERDF funding supports the promotion of public and private investments helping to reduce regional disparities across the Union through programmes addressing regional development, economic change, enhanced competitiveness and territorial cooperation throughout the EU. Funding priorities include research, innovation, environmental protection and risk prevention, while infrastructure investment retains an important role, especially in the least developed regions. ERDF can therefore be an important source of complementary funding for research, where infrastructure and research facilities are lacking. MCA is complementary since it supports the qualitative and quantitative development of the human capital needed to accompany infrastructure development (and economic and regional development more widely). The converse is also true – the provision of infrastructure needs to keep pace with demand from an increasing number of researchers. The MCA COFUND mechanism has an explicit regional dimension, which strengthens its complementarity with Structural Funding and opens up the prospect of positive synergies.

In some rare cases there are overlaps with the EU structural funds. For example, in Estonia, mobility programmes for post-doctoral researchers have been set up using both Structural Funds (Mobilitas - €20.3 million with 85% funding from ESF\(^66\)) and COFUND (ERMOS - €4.6 million with 40% funding from MCA). However, on the whole, NCPs indicate that COFUND offers significant added value in terms of overcoming some of the issues of fragmentation as well as providing more opportunities for international mobility.

About two-thirds of COFUND beneficiaries appear also to participate in other EU programmes and a third have not, although we have no detailed information at this stage on which specific EU initiatives are most prevalent in this respect. Synergy with other programmes operated by the same COFUND beneficiaries is rated highly; many highlighting ‘spill-over’ effects in terms of increasing the visibility, quality and scope of other regional/national programmes, connecting these to an international arena. This seems to provide some supporting evidence for a contribution towards addressing fragmentation in research mobility schemes.

Evidence from interviews with NCPs does highlight the relevance of MCA to national research policy and strategy, particularly in terms of the increasing importance of internationalisation and research mobility in national strategies and policies. In this regard, NCPs consider MCA highly relevant and to a large extent offer an important complement to other national funding streams. However, it is important to note that MCA is more relevant in some countries than others - some countries already have extensive

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opportunities for post-doctoral grants (e.g. Norway), whilst in other countries with fewer such opportunities, MCA is more integral to national strategies and policies (e.g. Romania and Slovakia). NCPs generally recognise the future potential for MCA to increase in relevance as the research community grows.

It was also reported by some of the NCPs that COFUND offers opportunity to target regional and/or national needs better than Individual Fellowships. This is supported by the evidence from the survey of hosts, which suggests that COFUND is seen as more likely to be complementary to regional development strategies than Individual Fellowships. Although to the extent that COFUND programmes are allowed to target specific organisational and regional/national needs, this also implies that the COFUND programmes represent a more structured approach to funding researchers than that of the Individual Fellowships and grants which are open to all fields of research.

Participating organisations and individuals

3.1.3 Introduction

The overarching objective of Activity 2 'Lifelong Training and Career Development' under the People specific programme is to enhance the career prospects of experienced researchers.

Specifically, this is to be achieved by providing support to individual researchers, through the direct modality of Individual Fellowships or via COFUND fellowship programmes at national, regional and international level, in order to allow them to:

1. Complement or acquire new skills and competencies;
2. Enhance inter/multidisciplinary and/or intersectoral mobility of researchers;
3. Take up longer-term positions in Europe.

Specific efforts are also to be made to increase participation by female researchers⁶⁷, by designing the actions to ensure that researchers can achieve an appropriate work/life balance and by facilitating resumption of a research career after a break. We now examine the relevance of each of these to the needs of research organisations, research funding organisations and individual researchers.

The surveys and follow-up interviews explored the motivations of MCA fellows to assess reasons for deciding to apply to the programme, together with the impacts on their careers that they expected would result, and the types of training offered by the fellowships that appeals to them the most. It is also of interest, in terms of the relevance of the support offered, to explore the backgrounds of the researchers participating (to assess whether the programme favours those with a particular previous background or experience).

⁶⁷ Council Decision 2006/973/EC concerning the “People” programme: “In the implementation of the programme adequate attention needs to be paid to gender mainstreaming...” and Decision 1982/2006/EC concerning the Seventh Framework programme: “...human potential in research and technology should be strengthened... not least through a significant increase in the presence of women in research...”
In particular, we focus on how the beneficiary organisations perceive the advantages and benefits of participating and what added value may be derived, for themselves but also for regions, countries and the EU as a whole. For host organisations we are therefore interested in how the MCA fellowships are proving relevant in three main ways: i) advantages to hosting an MCA fellowship, how participating is helping host organisations to improve their offer and the outcomes delivered (serving as a stimulus in terms of better processes for example); ii) improving impacts (e.g. increased research outputs or the quality of researchers) and; iii) enhancing the reputation and visibility of the host organisations.

We are also concerned with the relevance of the Specific Objectives as they relate to organisations operating COFUND programmes: primarily to support them to operate more and better international mobility programmes for experienced (post-doctoral) researchers and to raise the quality of researchers and research outputs to which they have access. These potential benefits represent enhancements to the 'services' participating organisations can offer (including, for example, making improvements in working and employment conditions). In terms of COFUND specifically, we focus on the needs of programme beneficiary organisations, as distinct from host organisations (although a significant number of COFUND beneficiaries are also hosts).

3.1.4 Complement and acquire new skills and competences

The need to complement and acquire new skills and competences has a number of inter-linked dimensions. In particular it can be met through internationalisation, which provides access to a wider range of better quality research and career opportunities and knowledge networks; in turn potentially contributing to a more open European labour market.

For both IFs and COFUND fellows, developing research skills was highlighted in the survey as the main motivation for applying for a fellowship, followed by gaining funds for research and gaining international experience (see Table A6.2 and A6.3 in Annex 6, which is consistent with the findings of previous evaluations and reinforces the continuing strong relevance of this factor over time\(^ {68}\)). COFUND fellows were slightly more likely than MCA fellows as a whole to highlight developing research skills as a key career progression goal which they expected the MCA fellowship to have an impact upon. For COFUND beneficiaries the benefits of the fellowships offered through their programmes cover a wide range: developing the research skills of individuals; providing international experience and making financial resources available are highlighted the most.

The opportunity to move internationally\(^ {69}\) is widely seen as a very positive factor and MCA fellows felt it would enhance their CV, particularly for those from outside the EU: "...scientists need to keep up to speed with scientific methods in other countries and to work with international people - Marie Curie helped me to do this" (IF interview). Conversely, there are some fellows who pointed to research as the primary factor; and better research facilities and better quality education were cited as key motivations by a significant proportion of the fellows interviewed. Similarly, lack of availability of specific research facilities may also be a key driver, particularly in countries where key infrastructure and/ or facilities are not in place (as highlighted by the NCP in Malta for example). Those who had already travelled widely in their career were clearly moving for research reasons rather than to gain international experience. Most

\(^ {68}\) FP6 Ex-post Impact Assessment, Page 4 : advanced research skills as a key training and development impact
\(^ {69}\) Council Decision 2006/973/EC concerning the “People” programme: “The international dimension is a fundamental component of human resources in research and development in Europe”.

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fellows seem to agree that both the international and research dimensions are inter-linked and important (i.e. the opportunity to work with leading researchers and institutions) and as such carry more or less equal weight across MCA in terms of motivating and attracting applicants.

The survey also provides some insights into the types of researchers involved in MCA fellowships, in particular the extent to which the programme is providing opportunities to those with no previous experience of trans-national mobility of some kind and the extent of any cross-sectoral movement. A significant proportion of MCA fellows have previously worked abroad (61% elsewhere in the EU or elsewhere in the world). COFUND fellows are slightly less likely to have previously worked abroad (see Table A6.7 in Annex 6).

Developing **stronger research networks** features strongly across both mechanisms and it is clear that researchers and hosts alike view participation in Marie Curie as important in enhancing their research reputation and give them access to wider, in particular international, professional networks, as well as allowing them to gain the necessary funding to pursue their research interest. The evidence indicates that participation helps to build links (the hosts benefit from the researchers' contacts), augments research capacity and provides much needed income to the host institution. As one host stated, MCA is: "...one of the only ways to attract best researchers (there are few other opportunities with similar levels of attractiveness and rates of pay for fellows)". Cross-border network effects have also emerged prominently from the evidence of previous evaluations: for example the Long-Term Schemes Report annexed to the FP6 Ex-post Impact Assessment Study highlighted the significant “network formation impact”, which has strengthened since FP470.

One of the intended effects of MCA fellowships is to improve **research environments**, and increase the **quality of research**, as well as the volume of research outputs. The survey provides evidence of positive effects of MCA fellowships on support of collaboration and networking; an increase in the number of joint or multiple author publications of the host institutions, and an increase in the number of additional grant applications. However evidence of the role of MCA fellowships in improving the research environments provided is weak. Again, the extent to which this is because the research environments in many host institutions are already of high quality is not clear at this stage. In the same vein, extending research opportunities and changing research fields was also highlighted as a strong motivation for a number of MCA fellows. This flexibility and openness (by subject area) is also seen by NCPs as a key strength of MCA, since many national funding streams tend to be focussed on particular subject areas (feedback from Denmark and Poland) and age groups (Romania).

We are also interested in exploring the impact of MCA on **institutions' research outputs** and here the survey evidence highlighted this as a significant need, while follow-up interviews with hosts identified significant positive impacts, focusing in particular on publications, presentations, networking effects, collaborations (with organisations linked through the fellow). An example from Poland provides an illustration: "Owing to the fellowship, the Institute is going to open a new research department, most probably managed by the fellow and benefiting from the research capacity acquired during the fellowship. The fellow initiated cooperation with the university in Peru which resulted in joint research projects. The Institute has also enhanced the scope of research and lectures offered for students. There are also plans for joint research projects in future".

70 FP6 Ex-post Impact Assessment, Page 53
The three potential advantages rated least positively by hosts included: being part of a strategy for regional development; assisting host-institute researchers to move abroad; and complementing other national and EU funding initiatives with which the host institutions are involved (see Table A6.28 in Annex 6). From the survey evidence, the factors rated comparatively less important by MCA fellows are developing transferable skills and the quality of supervision arrangements. By comparing responses concerning the main factors that fellows value in their own research field (in terms of career progression) with those they value highly in MCA, there is a strong correlation, suggesting a high degree of relevance. Accessing the necessary financial resources figures more prominently outside of the MCA fellowship, suggesting financial pressures may be less in MCA. Developing trans-national networks through MCA fellowships is again highly valued compared with the research field in general. Transferable skills are not given a particularly high priority by MCA fellows when they are asked about important factors in terms of progressing in their own research field (see Table A6.5 in Annex 6).

Summary: relevance

We were asked to consider a number of specific evaluation questions concerning the relevance of COFUND and Individual Fellowships objectives and these are now addressed.

To what extent have COFUND and Individual Fellowships objectives proved relevant to the needs of:

a) ERA?
b) research organisations?
c) research funding organisations?
d) life-long training and career development of individual researchers?

The objectives that underpin COFUND and Individual Fellowships have a relatively strong degree of relevance to the ERA, specifically in terms of enhancing the capacity and quality of the EU labour force. The COFUND mechanism’s objectives give that modality a clear and specific role to play in supporting the ERA, through the mobilisation and leveraging of national and regional resources and providing opportunities to widen participation in fellowship activity, for organisations and individuals. MCA objectives are relevant to overcoming barriers to mobility which ERA targets and towards addressing fragmentation (especially through COFUND). Efforts concerning the achievement of common standards with respect to employment conditions of experienced researchers (through promotion of the Code and Charter for example) are also highly relevant to the ERA as a means to encourage researchers to stay in their chosen field, stay in or return to Europe and assist the career progression and employability of individuals. MCA also contributes towards reinforcing thematic priorities set at EU level (through better co-ordination and alignment of these goals) and through its contribution to increasing internationalisation and fostering trans-national knowledge networking. Relevance to the Europe 2020 flagship initiative ‘Innovation Union’ is also strong, through MCA’s support for contributions to investments in people to promote world-class research performance and indirect impacts on the creation of 1 million new research jobs in Europe.
In terms of the **relevance of the MCA’s objectives to the needs of participants:**

**Complement and acquire new skills and competences:** This is the single most relevant objective to MCA fellows (in fact COFUND fellows appear to be even more motivated to enhance their core research skills than Individual Fellows). It is also very important to host organisations, for which the relevance lies primarily in augmenting their research teams with high quality researchers, and strengthening research outputs and international knowledge networks. The focus on skills and competences is strongly linked to internationalisation, since it provides access to a wider range of better quality research, career opportunities and knowledge networks. Extending research opportunities and changing research fields as a route to enhancing skills is also a strong motivation for a number of fellows. The flexibility and openness offered (seen as a key strength of MCA), also widens the choice of opportunities to acquire advanced research skills in particular subject areas; more so than is often the case at national level. The skills and competences objective is just as relevant to COFUND hosts as it is to Individual Fellowship hosts, except the former are more likely to be linked to regional development strategies and to have made improvements to research environments (suggesting participating COFUND host institutions may be starting from a lower baseline in terms of that particular factor). Given the emphasis placed on core research skills by MCA fellows and hosts, the objective to promote transferable skills appears less relevant than those skills more closely associated with day-to-day research tasks.

**Enhance inter/multidisciplinary and/or multi-sectoral mobility:** MCA fellowships are dominated by the HE sector and cross-sectoral mobility appears to be rare. For COFUND beneficiaries, promoting inter-sectoral research does not appear to be a specific priority and is not widely perceived as one of the main objectives of MCA fellowships – for example the results of the survey suggest that nearly a third of COFUND programmes include inter-sectoral and/or inter-disciplinary elements while the remaining majority do not. This objective therefore appears to be of relatively limited relevance to participants.

**Take up long-term positions in Europe:** This objective has strong relevance to the needs of participants given the potential for MCA fellowships to bring greater stability into researchers’ careers by offering fixed-term contracts for two years for example, and easier access to a wider range of research opportunities (and employment opportunities) than might be available through national provision. Contractual and working conditions are targeted, to encourage experienced researchers to stay in or return to Europe and to attract researchers from outside Europe. Most fellows believe that participating in MCA will assist them to obtain a permanent position (this applies equally to IFs and COFUND fellows).

**Ensure equal opportunities and resume a research career after a break:** These objectives are relevant to the needs of individual researchers in particular. Participation rates for women in MCA fellowships are approaching the 40% target set by the EU (36.4% for Individual Fellowships and an estimated 39.5% for COFUND. This may be set against the prevailing participation rate for women in the wider research context: based on Eurostat data, women are estimated to account for less than a third of researchers in the EU27. Wider research evidence shows that women can face a number of challenges when resuming any career, including a research career. However, the evidence on application rates and

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71 Although it should be noted that the proportion of women is significantly higher in the government and higher education sector (approximately 40%) than in the business sector (less than 20%).
motivations indicates that MCA fellowships are not currently seen as a principal route back into a research career.

**To what extent have COFUND and Individual Fellowships objectives proved relevant to EU political priorities and global objectives (e.g. Treaty of Lisbon, Europe 2020)?**

The MCA’s objectives have a high degree of relevance to EU political priorities and global objectives. MCA has a coherence, structure and organisational format that links strongly to the achievement of its objectives and intervention logic. This ensures a strategic approach, where each element contributes to the greater whole. For example, by supporting experienced researchers to continue and advance their careers and encouraging the mobility of researchers (from Europe and the rest of the world), the activities can be seen to strengthen the human potential (quantitatively and qualitatively) in research and technology in Europe and thus support the agendas set out in Lisbon 2000-2010, Europe 2020 and the 2020 Vision for the ERA.

**To what extent has COFUND proved complementary to other EU initiatives and programmes in the field of research, training and innovation (e.g. Joint Programming, European Institute of Innovation and Technology, Structural Funds)?**

MCA (including COFUND) objectives fit logically and coherently within the other components of FP7 and there is no evidence of duplication or significant overlap in that context. Whereas the FP7 “Cooperation” focuses on research projects, “Capacity” on research infrastructure and “Ideas” on building research teams in frontier, higher-risk areas of investigation, the People programme/MCA focuses on the human capital dimension. There are similarities between MCA fellowships and the ERC’s grant schemes for researchers offered through the Ideas programme, but there is no mobility requirement within the latter initiative and its main aim is to build research teams around specific fields of research, rather than directly support career development through enhancement of skills and competences. MCA objectives complement the objectives of a number of other EU-level initiatives including JTIs, the EIT and Structural Funds.

About two-thirds of COFUND beneficiaries appear also to participate in other EU programmes; although we have no detailed information at this stage on which specific EU initiatives are most prevalent in this respect. Synergy with other programmes operated by the same COFUND beneficiaries is rated highly; many highlighting ‘spill-over’ effects in terms of increasing the visibility, quality and scope of other regional national programmes, connecting these to an international arena.
4.0 Effectiveness and utility

Introduction

We will now examine the evidence concerning how effective the programme is in terms of meeting the Operational Objectives of Activities 2 and 4 of MCA, which are summarised in the table below.

Table 4.1 Summary of MCA Activities 2 and 4 operational objectives

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Activity 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>IEF</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Support career development of experienced researchers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Enhance competences of experienced researchers through acquisition of multi-disciplinary skills and/or multi-sectoral experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Resume researchers career after a break</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CIG</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Facilitate researchers' integration in EU through providing them with a research budget.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Transfer of knowledge prior their take up of CIG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Develop lasting co-operation with the scientific and/or industrial environment of the country from which they have moved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COFUND</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Increase Europe wide mobility possibilities for training and career development of experienced researchers</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Enhance competencies of researchers at different stages of their careers</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Enhance multi-disciplinary skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Provide opportunities for inter-sectoral experiences i.e. mobility opportunities between private and public sector organisations</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Support researchers in attaining and/or strengthening a leading independent position</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Integrate researchers into a research career in Member States and associated countries</td>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Activity 4</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>IOF</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Provide European researchers the opportunity to receive training and acquire new knowledge in high-level organisations based outside Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IIF</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Facilitate knowledge transfer between European and Third Country researchers through attracting top-class researchers to Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Develop research cooperation between Europe and Third Countries</td>
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</table>

In addition we need to take into account the overall People programme implementation principle concerning working conditions and where COFUND “...programmes are expected to offer adequate working conditions for the final beneficiaries”.\(^0\)

Specifically, we explore the visibility and profile of MCA fellowships, access to the programme, the impacts on individuals' career development and employability, and satisfaction with training in transferable skills, supervision arrangements, contractual and working conditions, and the timing of the application, contracting and implementation process. The effects of participating on organisations' operational administrative procedures, programme objectives and modalities and success in attracting high-quality researchers are also addressed.
Profile of MCA fellowships

Individual Fellows, host organisations and COFUND beneficiaries all agree the programme as a whole is well known and has a high profile. For example, more than half of the fellows state that the fellowships are very well known in their own research field (see Table A6.23 in Annex 6). Comments from interviews with fellows reinforce the view that Marie Curie fellowships are generally regarded as being very visible and enjoy a high profile and prestigious reputation within Europe and the EU15 in particular. The vast majority of hosts also agree that MCA fellowships are well known within their organisation (see Table A6.34 in Annex 6), are well-known generally, and have a high reputation, which helps to attract high-quality researchers. According the head of grants at one institution: "For the individual it is very very prestigious and still maintains its position as a mark of excellence."

However, it is also reported that MCA fellowships are much more visible in Europe than in the US. This closely mirrors the finding of the previous MCA evaluation (FP6)\textsuperscript{12}, which concluded that the high level of awareness and prestige of an MCA award makes it an attractive aspiration, but that brand awareness is weaker in the US than in Europe. The evidence also supports the view that MCA is less well known in EU12 (e.g. Poland), and in subjects where research is not published mostly in English.

The effect of this reputation is, of course, likely to benefit the recipients: one fellow said that if she tells people that she has completed the MCA fellowship…… “they look at her in a different light because it is such a prestigious fellowship”. It was noted that MCA is included as one of the criteria in the German CHE Excellence Ranking of European universities for the disciplines of biology, chemistry, physics and mathematics.

Reflecting the relatively recent introduction of COFUND, the profile of the COFUND fellowships are considered to be less pronounced, with less than a fifth of the MCA fellows surveyed considering it to be very well known. Certainly, among all host organisations, familiarity with Individual Fellowships appears to be somewhat higher compared with COFUND fellowships. Nevertheless, COFUND fellowships are still considered to be moderately well known by approaching two-thirds of COFUND fellows; and it appears that being a part of MCA brings benefits in terms of profile: compared with similar co-funded (national/international) programmes, participation in COFUND is reported by almost two-thirds of COFUND beneficiaries to have significantly increased the visibility of their organisation, as well as the national and international programmes they manage. Notably, only three programme organisations stated that it had not increased the visibility of the organisation and the national and international programmes they manage (see Table A6.56 in Annex 6).

The evidence from in-depth interviews with COFUND fellows is less positive, with the majority of fellows feeling that COFUND was currently low in visibility, while “Marie Curie” as a brand was much more widely known. This relatively low profile also extends to COFUND fellows themselves – although the evidence is mixed (some interviewees said they didn’t know that the programme was part funded by Marie Curie COFUND, another that they only became aware of the MCA connection after they had started the fellowship and another said that MCA had not been used in their title until recently), even where fellows were aware of the EU component the evidence suggests this is not a significant issue, since the main focus for fellows is on the research. This may indicate that while IFs consider the Marie Curie brand and prestigious reputation as a factor in pursuing a fellowship, COFUND fellows are simply pursuing good quality fellowships. In turn this suggests that COFUND and IF modalities are tapping into different
segments of the population of eligible researchers. Certainly there is little evidence that potential fellows are equally aware of both modalities and are weighing up the advantages and disadvantaged of each.

Whilst recognising this significant increase in visibility, the COFUND beneficiaries are cautious about reporting a similar improvement in attracting more and better quality researchers, compared with other programmes run by the organisation. Just over a third of the survey respondents reported that they had been 'very much more successful' or 'slightly more successful' in attracting more and better quality researchers, compared with other programmes run by the organisation. However, a considerable number of respondents were unable to answer this question (20) (see Table A6.57 in Annex 6). When compared with other programmes at regional/national/international level (i.e. those run by organisations other than co-funded programme organisations) a much smaller number of respondents stated that they had been 'very much more successful' or 'slightly more successful' in attracting more and better quality researchers (10). Again, a considerable number of respondents were unable to answer this question (30). On a positive note, only one organisation stated that it was slightly less successful in attracting more and better quality researchers, compared with other programmes at regional/national/international level (see Table A6.58 in Annex 6).

COFUND Organisations that had experienced an improvement in attracting more and better quality researchers believed that the prestige and visibility of Marie Curie increased competition for fellowships and the chance to offer international experience as important aspects in this regard. However, there was some evidence from the interviews to suggest that it has been difficult to promote some of the smaller programmes. This in turn has led to difficulties in attracting high quality researchers. For example, one COFUND programme in the biomedicine field has gone from annual calls to ongoing calls to attract more applicants.

Accessing fellowships

Recruitment to all MCA fellowships is generally seen as fairly straightforward, open and transparent. It was reported by the NCPs that IFs are seen as the 'gold standard' of fellowships which in turn attracts the best researchers and top universities. The selection process is seen as very competitive and only those with academic excellence are funded.

We were interested to know how hosts attracted MCA fellows to their institutions and according to the survey results it appears that 'informal' methods are the most commonly used: most hosts seem to attract fellows via word of mouth (77% of hosts), followed by the internet (43% of hosts). The least common means used to attract fellows appear to be newspapers and other public media (5% of hosts use these) and EURAXESS services (11% of hosts use these) (see Table A6.35 in Annex 6). Follow-up interviews with hosts confirmed that the most common route in terms of attracting fellows is through academic networks and contacts, which is seen as a way to maintain excellence. It appears relatively uncommon for hosts to be approached "out of the blue" but this depends on the institutions. Some rely more than others on being approached by potential fellows, possibility those with less well developed international networks (newly established institutions or those in EU12 for example).

In terms of the advertising strategies employed by COFUND beneficiaries, the Internet (used by 89% of survey respondents), EURAXESS services (used by 86%) and word or mouth (71%) appear to be the
most frequently used advertising mechanism to promote incoming COFUND programmes and attract fellows. Direct marketing to institutions appears popular (used by 68% or survey respondents), but newspapers and other public media is the least frequently used advertising mechanism – used by less than a third of COFUND beneficiaries (see Table A6.59 in Annex 6). It is less certain if the MCA brand helps attract researchers to COFUND (or whether they are simply interested in the fellowship programme per se).

Comparing the different types of hosts, the survey suggests that a higher proportion of hosts with COFUND fellows only (compared with hosts with Individual Fellows only), use the internet and scientific journals to attract new fellows: 67% of “COFUND only” hosts use the internet to attract fellows, in comparison with 40% of “IF only” hosts; also, more than a quarter of “COFUND only” organisations use scientific journals to attract fellows compared with only 15% of “IF only” hosts. However, there is no clear evidence from interviews of significant differences between Individual Fellowships and COFUND in the way that researchers access fellowships - in both modalities the host supervisor is a key player. Most fellows seem to find out about the programme through word of mouth or publicity from their university, although a number of fellows did say they found out about their fellowship directly through a website. In terms of accessibility, an example of how fellows are secured for COFUND, compared with IFs, was provided by one COFUND beneficiary interviewed, who suggested COFUND has a wider choice of access routes and is therefore considered more open than IFs in this respect.

The evidence therefore suggests that in many cases a pre-existing contact or relationship precedes the MCA application; and that IFs are more likely to have had some previous relationship with the host organisations than is the case for COFUND. Networks are important and the word-of-mouth effects are clearly significant (the interviews identified several instances where one person takes a particular fellowship path and others from the same country/institution follow). This does not necessarily imply closed networks and some fellows have found their fellowships via web searches, followed up by assistance from the relevant supervisor in the prospective host institution. In general the evidence highlights the important role that supervisors play in completing successful MCA applications.

The evidence from the survey also suggests that the application process itself does not present a major barrier to participation – some 76% rated the process at least ‘neither easy nor difficult’ and 43% easy or very easy. Around 24% of fellows rated the application process difficult or very difficult (see Table A6.10 in Annex 6). From the host perspective the evidence suggests a rather neutral position: most considering it “neither difficult nor easy”, with a tendency towards “easy to understand and complete” (see Table A6.36 in Annex 6). On the whole, the feedback from interviews with host institutions indicates the application process for IFs is not too difficult, although it is considered very time-consuming by many and the view was expressed more than once that some of the terminology is not always clear. In general, hosts find the application process comparable, but slightly more difficult than, other grant applications. For example, the evidence from interviews with hosts suggests MCA application processes are no better or no worse than other EU programmes (including European Science Foundation) and some international programmes (from a UK perspective the Newton International fellowship or Axa research schemes); but are more burdensome than some national programmes, (for example, the German Exchange Service and Alexander von Humboldt). Hosts do, however, recognise that MCA has several key benefits over other schemes, including the comparatively higher funding level.
However, responses from those with experience of applying to similar programmes suggest the MCA process is perhaps slightly more challenging (see Table A6.11 in Annex 6). This is supported by the evidence from follow-up interviews with MCA fellows: the overall impression is that fellows find the process difficult and requiring significant effort, but most recognise that the benefits make it worthwhile. The fellows interviewed did however differentiate between the different parts of the application form, stating that the part concerning their proposed research was straightforward; while the financial and administrative parts of the application were seen as being complicated and bureaucratic. Several pointed to potential improvements: for example highlighting the duplication of questions making the process more time consuming; and scope for the wording of some of the questions to be made clearer. The involvement of the institution in the application process was seen by the fellows as being an important factor in the success of the application.

It would seem institutions that have previous or multiple experience of the process have an advantage. The interviews with hosts also identified a desire that more emphasis should be placed on the scientific/research content (the research achievements of the candidate for example) of the application form and less on other, more generic, content (such as EU added value for example).

There seems to be a slight tendency to report that the application process is “more easy to understand” for institutes that have hosted ERG Individual Fellows compared to IEF fellows. Indeed at the instrument level, hosts with IEF and IIF fellows are slightly more negative about the application process, in comparison with hosts with ERG, IRG and IOF fellows.

**Looking specifically at COFUND**, the survey evidence suggests that the application process is considered to be significantly easier to complete and understand among COFUND fellows compared with Individual Fellows. Generally, COFUND fellows also consider the application process to be less difficult than other comparable programmes. This finding is confirmed by the evidence from follow-up interviews with COFUND fellows, which indicates that the application processes for COFUND programmes are less difficult than for Individual Fellowships; and that the application processes for COFUND are rated as comparable to similar programmes (whereas for IFs it is considered more challenging than comparable programmes). COFUND fellow interviewees also highlighted the usefulness of the support provided by institutions for making COFUND applications. NCPs appear to agree with the general view that the COFUND application process may be easier.

Turning to the application process to secure co-funding for their fellowship programmes (where potential COFUND beneficiaries have to apply to the REA) the survey results show that, for the majority, the application process was 'straightforward' (55%) or 'very straightforward' (7.5%), although more than a third of programme organisations considered it to be 'difficult' or 'very difficult'. Notably, programmes with outgoing mobility appear to have found the application process more difficult than programmes with incoming and reintegration mobility (see Table A6.60 in Annex 6). A possible explanation for this may lie in the requirement for those promoting outgoing mobility to collaborate with organisations outside Europe, which may be less familiar with EU processes. Approximately two-fifths of respondents had experience of other comparable application processes at the EU and national level, whilst approaching half of respondents did not have any comparable experience (see Table A6.61 in Annex 6). Interestingly, most organisations with no other comparable experience found the application process straightforward, whilst almost half of the organisations with EU level experience found it difficult. Generally, programmes with comparable previous experience found that the application process, on average, slightly more difficult or
similar to other applications (based on average scores) than other comparable programmes, particularly at the international (not including EU) and national level (see Table A6.62 in Annex 6).

Despite any difficulties experienced during the application process, the guidance documents for the COFUND application process were found to be helpful for the overwhelming majority of programme organisations (85%) (see Table A6.63 in Annex 6). In particular, the guidance is considered to be clear and understandable, with good use of examples. Some respondents also mentioned that the guidance had been improved compared with previous calls/programmes. Similarly, four in five programme organisations found that the information provided on the relevant websites was helpful (see Table A6.64 in Annex 6). However, a common criticism of the guidance and the website was that they contain too much information, which makes them relatively time consuming to use and navigate around.

There is evidence from the interview material to suggest that once proposals have been approved, it takes a significant period of time to set up a COFUND programme. Indeed, the average time between the call deadline and the contract signature (between the REA and the COFUND beneficiary organisation) is 530 days (or 17 months) - based on the 2007 and 2008 calls. The minimum time between the call deadline and the contract signature is 348 days (or 11 months), whilst the maximum time is 666 days (or 22 months). This is supported by feedback from the REA itself: although the number of programmes that have failed at the negotiation stage, or which have been terminated prematurely, is small, there is no doubt that both sides feel that negotiations have been longer than expected.

Enhancing career progression and employability

The evidence from follow-up interviews with MCA fellows (and also in the perspectives of NCPs), shows career progression (specifically gaining experience) as the dominant rationale for participating. Fellows are clearly attracted by the quality of host institutions’ research and often have some prior knowledge of or contact with the desired destination institution. Other very common motivating factors include the prestige and generous salary of a Marie Curie IF, and the opportunity to undertake more independent research (in several cases this extended to fellows establishing their own laboratories). COFUND fellows are just as likely as all MCA fellows to highlight the prestige of the fellowship as an important motivating factor and the evidence from follow-up interviews indicates that COFUND fellows feel as strongly as all MCA fellows that having the fellowship on their CV will help their future career prospects. A number of COFUND fellows also mentioned the attractive salary as a motivating factor. Another COFUND Fellow commented that having the “…opportunity to meet other people of outstanding research quality” was important to him.

In terms of expected impact on fellows’ careers, strengthening their research reputation features prominently in fellows’ responses to the survey, together with assisting a move to a more senior position and helping to obtain a permanent position (60%-80% of all MCA fellows expected future impacts in these areas) (see Table A6.4 in Annex 6). The FP6 Ex-post Impact Assessment noted similar findings, suggesting a continuing positive trend (from FP5 to FP6 to FP7). Feedback from interviews with MCA fellows supports this and shows that the majority consider that gaining access to better facilities, research

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72 Also considered a key driver by many of the NCPs we interviewed
73 Page 29: 63% of FP6 respondents reported/expected a significant impact on career progression
environments and (more internationally-focused) networks provides significant benefits in terms of enhancing their career progression prospects. Having an international dimension is seen as a very positive career move. Indeed the interviews with fellows provided some specific instances of improving employability: "When I came back to Estonia this September, I immediately got a senior researcher position" (MCA interviewee). The evidence from interviewees also suggests that it is important to fellows that MCA is a 'well recognised' fellowship.

In addition to building reputational capital and accessing high quality research environments and networks, there is evidence that fellows also value other factors that can help improve their career prospects: flexibility and freedom to pursue their own research interests and the five-year duration of some (COFUND) fellowships for example. The opportunity to extend their research or to change their field of research was also seen by fellows as an important benefit, in addition to the continuation of their learning experience (presumably, where otherwise this would have come to a premature end). There is also evidence that the financial security provided by a two-or-three year fellowship is valued because it enables fellows to focus on their research. For the fellows on the reintegration programme the ability to return home was seen as the main benefit.

Looking at the survey results concerning motivating factors in participating in MCA, returning after a career break was ranked as the lowest priority of all - very low numbers of respondents ranked it first (less than 1%), and those that did were concentrated in the 40-49 and 49+ age groups. Taken together with data indicating that immediately before taking up a fellowship most individuals worked in an HE institution (78%) or public research body (17%), the evidence suggests that in practice the effectiveness of the MCA fellowships in assisting resumption of a research career after a break is very limited. In order to encourage researchers to resume research after a career break, a Career Restart Panel (CAR) was set up for the 2010 IEF call. By applying to CAR, researchers are not competing with researchers who have had an uninterrupted career. Table 4.2 below sets out the number of proposals submitted and retained for funding under the CAR panel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Proposals submitted</th>
<th>Evaluated</th>
<th>Ranked</th>
<th>Reserve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAR</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total IEF</td>
<td>2,853</td>
<td>2,832</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: European Commission data

The table above provides further evidence that the support provided to researchers who have had a career break is relatively small in scale, with such researchers accounting for less than 4% of the proposals submitted under the 2010 IEF call and around 3% of the proposals approved. However, given that this represents the first call for this new panel, success rates (around 16%) suggest demand is reasonably strong and may well increase in future calls. It is difficult to assess the effectiveness of this

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74 If we look at the profile and visibility of MCA (see Section 4.2) we can see this is indeed the case, at least within Europe.

75 Researchers applying to the Career Restart Panel must, at the time of the deadline for submission of proposals, not be active in research and not have held a fellowship, or been employed under contract in research for at least 12 months (The 2011 People Programme Guide for Applicants 2011, IEF)
approach, given the absence of a benchmark or target (such as exists for the participation of women for example).

With regards to the profile of the researchers who apply through the CAR panel a slightly higher proportion of applicants are male (52%), although more than 76% of applicants retained for funding are women. The host organisations are exclusively higher education institutions or research organisations (accounting for 71% and 29% of applicants retained for funding respectively).

In terms of future career prospects the survey evidence suggests that following the completion of their MCA fellowship, more than 60% expect to remain in the institution where they completed the fellowship or return to the previous institution (see Table A6.25 in Annex 6). Future career prospects may be linked to the perceived impacts on the MCA fellows’ research outputs, with around two-thirds expecting that the MCA fellowship will result in long lasting collaborations and increase in the number of joint or multiple author publications. A third of respondents also anticipated that the fellowship would result in the creation of spin-off projects and increase the number of single author publications (see Table A6.27 in Annex 6).

Evidence from the in-depth consultations suggests that the future plans of fellows depend very much on individual circumstances, including the results of their research or family commitments. Some will seek employment at their current host organisation, if possible gaining a permanent position; others will look for further research opportunities further afield, while others will return to their home country to find opportunities. One interviewee said: ‘most researchers will tend towards going back to their home country, where they completed their PhD, since their networks are stronger there’. Further mobility is more likely to be restricted by practical rather than research factors.

Evidence from follow-up interviews with fellows suggests that there is no difference between the future plans of IFs and COFUND fellows; they are all very diverse. A significant proportion of COFUND fellows reported that they planned to stay at their host organisation if the funding permits, others would like to return to their country of origin and the remainder are looking for other international opportunities.

There appears to be no significant difference between the expected benefits for IFs and COFUND fellows. COFUND fellows mentioned spin-off projects, joint publications and new research techniques as being important. Although, a smaller proportion of COFUND fellows consider that the fellowship will have an impact on the creation of spin-off projects, support long-lasting collaborations and lead to an increase in the number of joint or multiple author publications.

The benefits highlighted by fellows in the on-line survey include a combination of personal, career and professional (research/scientific). Respondents to the online survey reported that benefits include; 3-5 publications, enduring relationships with supervisors, collaborations, language skills, increased visibility, networks, cultural experiences and benefits for families. The majority of fellows consulted during the in-depth consultations suggested that collaborations with colleagues and developing new contacts and networks were the most important benefits which they expected to take away.

In terms of benefits for the host, there is evidence from in-depth interviews with hosts that in most cases fellows do remain in contact with the host research team and that follow-on collaboration is common. It also appears quite likely that the fellow will remain at the host institution having obtained employment there. An example from a host in Spain illustrates ongoing collaboration: “...an FP7 Marie Curie Industry-
Academia Partnership and Pathway (IAPP) with an ex-fellow who had started an SME in another country.

Administrative and operational procedures

Here, we are interested in how participation in MCA may have resulted in changes in approach; either with explicit reference to the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for Recruitment of Researchers, or in areas similar to those covered by those documents. This helps us to explore the relevance of MCA fellowships in terms of achieving common standards across Europe in terms of some of the key elements of fellowship schemes, such as working conditions, recruitment and selection procedures and transparency.

The survey evidence indicates that host institutions are familiar with the principles in both the Charter and the Code - 75% of survey respondents claiming that their implementation procedures reflected the principles set out in these documents (see Table A6.29 in Annex 6). Almost all COFUND beneficiaries appear to be aware of the Charter and Code: about 17% reported that their procedures were directly based on these; the remainder that they were already compatible (see Table A6.51 in Annex 6). The survey results show that the procedures used by an overwhelming majority (86%) of COFUND beneficiary organisations reflect and/or are directly based on the principles set out in the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for Recruitment of Researchers. Notably, in the case of pre-existing fellowship programmes that have formed the basis for the COFUND programme, approaching 60% of beneficiary organisations report that participation in MCA has resulted in significant or moderate changes to the programme in response to the Charter (see Table A6.52 in Annex 6). One response was that: ‘The European Charter for Researchers is really helpful for our fellows and in the future could be also very sustainable value for us’.

There is also evidence of modest changes being made to the objectives of existing programmes or to the way they are delivered, as a result of becoming COFUND schemes (19% significantly and 42% "a little") (see Table A6.53 in Annex 3).

Turning to the extent to which participating in MCA has on specific operational and administrative procedures, the survey provides evidence of moderate effects on the evaluation and selection procedures used by hosts – these may increase the quality of applications received (increasing the success rates). In this respect COFUND hosts are more likely to have made changes than IF hosts: whereas 60-70% of IF hosts reported no change, 40-50% of COFUND hosts do report change.

However, there is little evidence from the survey results to suggest any significant change in a number of areas including the use of transparent evaluation criteria; the transparency of the procedures; the consideration of equal opportunities criteria; the use of independent peer review in the evaluation and selection processes and the portability of pension rights (see Table A6.32 in Annex 6). The extent to which these responses may reflect the prevalence of sufficient pre-existing procedures in host institutions is not clear.

76 See Section 3.2
The survey results also suggest that participation in MCA Activity 2 and 4 does not seem to have had huge wider organisational impacts on host organisations: however, moderate changes were noted; and 1 in 10 institutions reported making significant changes in terms of increasing the openness of their overall recruitment procedures towards transnational and trans-sectoral mobility (see Table A6.32 in Annex 3). There is evidence from the survey that participation in MCA is relevant in terms of increasing the quality of applications received by host institutions. Of course the need for change is dependent on the quality of the original measures put in place by host organisations, so this finding may be the result of hosts having already had appropriate procedures and approaches in place prior to taking part in MCA fellowships.

The evidence from follow-up interviews with hosts does suggest that a significant proportion of them were already working in ways consistent with the required approach (several had received EU HR awards) particularly in the UK. A minority of interviewees had made changes in order to comply more closely with the MCA rules and spirit of the Code and Charter: here examples include providing social security, tightening anti-discrimination policy with more inclusive language; committing to extend to fellows the same pension rights as staff; changing status of pre- and post-doctoral fellows to staff members with the same rights and obligations, health and safety, ethical behaviour and taking two weeks continuous leave. As one host institution observed: "The European Charter has crystallised things that were already there but turned them into concrete actions".

In terms of how running a COFUND programme may have influenced COFUND beneficiaries’ operational and administrative procedures the survey evidence again suggests this is moderate, although some organisations did report significant changes. Where more information was provided, it appears that any significant influence was likely to concern openness of recruitment to the scheme towards transnational and trans-sectoral mobility and the use of independent/international peer review (see Table A6.48 in Annex 6). Notably, significant changes were particularly apparent among new programme beneficiaries. In terms of the influence COFUND has had on approaches to programme administration, evidence of influence is stronger: on providing a supportive research environment; improving recruitment methods and appraisals and providing contracts to researchers (where just under half of respondents reported some effect). As we saw with the results of the host survey, there is limited evidence of influencing changes in arrangements for pension rights and approaches to equal opportunities (see Table A6.49 in Annex 3). Again, the strength of influence appears to be greater among new programme beneficiaries.

Contractual and working conditions

Under this heading we consider a number of factors that determine effectiveness, including the length of fellowships (whether these are sufficient for fellows to achieve the desired benefits), the contractual and working conditions (whether these provide a suitable set of conditions for research fellows to achieve their goals), and the sufficiency of funds provided to meet necessary costs.

The survey results give a clear indication that MCA fellows benefit significantly from improved contractual conditions compared with their previous post. An overwhelming 88% consider their contractual conditions to be at least the same if not better; and 30% rate them as ‘very much improved’ (see Table A6.12 in Annex 6). The evidence from follow-up consultations strongly suggests that the contractual
conditions that attach to MCA fellowships as a whole are seen by the majority as advantageous: specifically, salaries are usually higher than for any other post-doctoral fellowships and fellows are provided with travel allowances in addition to their salary.

Notably, differences in the working conditions appear to be less prominent across the two types of fellowships. The follow-up interviews revealed that some fellows have experienced practical difficulties, although most mention that they received valuable help and support from the host institutions. In particular, language skills emerged as an issue in some cases but several also note that English is commonly used and it is not always necessary to learn the local language for research purposes. A few fellows also mentioned difficulties or delays in obtaining visas or work permits.

Hosts acknowledge that the contractual conditions for MCA are satisfactory if not generous, making the salaries very attractive. This does cause some concern at institutions where colleagues at the same level or in more senior positions are receiving lower salaries than MCA fellows. Generally, the view of the NCPs consulted is that the contractual conditions and costs are appropriate overall, although some important issues were highlighted – salaries for fellows are often considered to be relatively generous (perhaps with the exception of allowances for research costs for certain subjects, e.g. laboratory costs for life sciences subjects for example). In some countries with low salaries for researchers, there is evidence that the relatively high salaries of MCA fellows creates tension with nationally funded researchers.

Other elements of the contract appear to be comparable with the conditions that applied to fellows’ previous positions and MCA contractual conditions are very rarely considered worse than previous positions. However, another fellow said that his contractual conditions “...were much better in the USA, than Europe, because in the USA there is more available funding for researchers”.

There is no doubt that COFUND fellows tend to regard the contractual conditions less positively than IFs (satisfactory or adequate) and more dependent on local conditions, but nonetheless satisfactory. The survey results certainly point to a much higher share of Individual Fellows having improved their contractual conditions compared with their previous research post, than COFUND fellows (a higher proportion of COFUND fellows state that their contractual conditions were much worse). It is likely that differences in contractual conditions between Individual Fellowships and COFUND fellowships, at least in part, reflects differences in the employment conditions of fellows (a relatively greater proportion of fellowships are provided in the form of stipends in COFUND). Taking into account the evidence from follow-up interviews with COFUND fellows, a less dramatic picture emerges: most COFUND fellows said that their contractual conditions were similar to their previous institutions; and some reported that their salary had increased. Overall, it appears that for COFUND fellows, conditions are comparable to other positions the researchers have had. There are, however, some comments that managing with dependants may be more of a challenge under COFUND than for IFs: “The salary is quite good if you are alone, but coming with your partners is difficult if you have to earn money for two persons” (COFUND fellow in Estonia). This issue is seldom mentioned by IFs in the interviews.

The survey included two questions relating to costs – the funding available for living costs on the one hand and research costs on the other. For living costs, the majority (80%) of respondents considered these adequate or slightly generous (compared with only 20% who thought they were inadequate) (see Table A6.13 in Annex 3). Follow-up interviews with MCA fellows confirmed this - the living allowance is reportedly generous for most of the fellows. A fellow in Sweden reported “…it was enough to support
myself and my two small children” and a fellow from the USA said “...it was enough to support myself and my wife, who couldn’t work because of visa restrictions”. There are suggestions that the devaluation of the Euro had also caused problems for fellows in recent years (some fellows suggested their salary has reduced by as much as 20% as a result). The interviews also collected several references to host institutions not paying IFs the full amount of their grant.

Linked to the above, and compared with IFs, COFUND fellows are much less likely to mention that the allowance for living costs is generous and allows them to maintain other commitments (dependants, property etc.). Rather, the prevailing sense amongst COFUND fellows appears to be that funding to meet living costs is adequate. Overall there is no evidence to suggest beneficiaries are significantly disadvantaged in terms of living costs, or that levels of funding are likely to deter applications.

For research costs the results of the survey are more balanced - about 40% felt these were adequate, 35% inadequate and 24% generous (see Table A6.14 in Annex 6). The consultation evidence suggests that, on the whole, MCA fellows are satisfied with current provision for covering these costs; although there is a suggestion that while this is the case for ‘basic’ research costs, depending on the area of research some fellows require additional funding, particularly for larger scale research projects entailing a significant fieldwork element or large quantities of consumables.

**Time to contract and start of fellowship**

In principle, successful fellows should be able to start their project about six months after the deadline for the call.

The actual procedure is as follows: after the Commission has decided which proposals are to be funded (evaluation results are estimated to be available within some four months after the relevant deadline for submission)\(^{77}\), a contract, setting out the forms and conditions of European Commission support, is prepared. This contract is between the Commission and the host institution. Contracts are sent out two weeks after the Commission’s selection and must be signed and returned to the Commission by the host institution within one month of receipt. The host institution must then conclude an agreement with the fellow, determining the conditions for the implementation of the project and their respective obligations. The fellow must commence the project no later than six months after the signature of the contract. In other words, the minimum time to start the project is about 6 months after deadline, whilst the maximum time to start the project is about 12 months after the deadline for the call\(^{78}\).

Based on the evidence from the surveys, a majority of MCA fellows wait 2-6 months between the call for applications and the grant being approved. Approximately two thirds of fellows then wait a maximum of 6 months before signing the contract, with 3 in 4 fellows then moving to their institution within two months of signing the contract. Approaching a fifth of fellows (18%) have to wait 2-6 months before moving to their institutions (see Table A6.20 in Annex 6), although this may also reflect the choices of individual researchers to delay the mobility.

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\(^{77}\) People Work Programme 2010

Notably, the process for handling applications appears to be quicker for COFUND fellows compared with Individual Fellows. For example, a significantly greater proportion of COFUND fellows only wait 2-6 months between the call for applications and the grant being approved (79% compared with 52%). Similarly, approximately half of COFUND fellows (46.5%) sign the contract within 2 months of the grant being approved compared with less than 1 in 10 of the Individual Fellows (see Table A6.21 in Annex 6).

Interestingly, most Individual Fellows (more than 3 in 4) move to their institution within 2 months of signing the contract, whilst approximately a third of COFUND fellows wait more than 2 months (see Table A6.22 in Annex 6). Consequently, for some COFUND fellows the relatively faster process in terms of signing the contract does not necessarily result in the fellow arriving at the institution sooner although, as mentioned above, this may reflect the choices of researchers to delay the mobility.

Whilst recognising that COFUND fellows tend to experience a relatively faster process in terms of signing the contract than most Individual Fellows, it is important to note that there is a long negotiation period between the REA and the COFUND beneficiary organisations before the programmes can start issuing fellowships. Indeed, the average time between the call deadline and the contract signature (between the REA and the COFUND beneficiary organisation) is 530 days (or 17 months) - based on the 2007 and 2008 calls. The minimum time between the call deadline and the contract signature is 348 days (or 11 months), whilst the maximum time is 666 days (or 22 months). Based on evidence from the COFUND beneficiaries this is far too long and is partly blamed by the time taken by the REA to respond to queries. Nevertheless, the COFUND beneficiary organisations also note that the REA generally provides quality support (albeit very slow) and understand that REA is a fairly new organisation that was still trying to find its feet. It was reported by some the NCPs that the time invested during the negotiation phase was seen as simplifying the implementation phase, in terms of contractual conditions. Although some countries favour more flexible arrangements (Sweden) with more variation in terms of the contractual conditions.

Satisfaction

An overwhelming 96% of MCA fellows surveyed consider the overall MCA fellowship experience to be quite or very satisfying (see Table A6.16 in Annex 6). Evidence was collected on satisfaction with a number of dimensions of fellowships including training, research outputs, access to research facilities and supervision arrangements.

Hosts appear to be offering a variety of training but each individual has different needs and perhaps attitudes (some will be more “self-contained” than others). One COFUND fellow interviewee certainly sees potential and “...would welcome more training funded by the fellowship in transferable skills, not how to use a device, but how to manage scientific interactions or write grant proposals”. There is no strong evidence of any differences between MCA as a whole and COFUND, but COFUND interviewees did appear more aware of and engaged in training than IFs.

As part of their MCA fellowships, some fellows have undertaken or plan to undertake training to develop their skills. Similarly the majority of MCA fellows are very or quite satisfied with the scope and quality of the training received (only about 9% were disappointed to a degree on both counts) (see Table A6.17 and A6.18 in Annex 6). Follow-up interviews did not suggest any significant problems with the quality of training for MCA fellowships and several examples were identified of transferable skills that may result
from participation in MCA: "...improving my presentation skills (in Ukraine she would only use a blackboard). Another fellow had training on presentation skills which he felt had improved his skills greatly. This focus is consistent with the types of training undertaken, or to be undertaken, amongst MCA fellows: those linked directly with research (writing articles and papers for publication, writing research proposals, research management skills, and, it might be argued, presentational skills) are the most common. The evidence from follow-up interviews demonstrates that fellows who participated in training thought it was very useful; but again, where particular examples of training are mentioned by fellows, these tend to focus on research-related tasks (including guidance on how to write articles and reports and how to collaborate with other scientists).

This evidence suggests a focus by MCA fellows on core interests; but it may also reflect that a proportion of the researchers involved have already acquired some experience and expertise in some of the more managerial competences. Of the arguably non-core research-related skills, language training appears the most common and was available to a large number of fellows (although it is not strictly a transferable skill at all). One fellow who received Swedish language training said "...it was very useful and she is now able to read and understand the language". Project management training was also common, but the survey evidence suggests the types that appear to be less relevant to fellows' needs include: media relations, wider management and administration skills and research ethics (see Table A6.6 in Annex 6).

The training element offered by COFUND programme hosts is considered appropriate by the majority of COFUND beneficiaries (77% considering it mandatory or desirable) (see Table A6.54 in Annex 6). Training in writing research reports, research management skills and writing research proposals was considered the most helpful components offered by COFUND programmes; and wider management and administration, financial management and IPR management the least relevant (see Table A6.55 in Annex 6). In common with MCA fellows as a whole, while not strictly a transferable skill, language training was the main form of training which has been undertaken by COFUND fellows and most agreed it had been useful. In terms of the degree of satisfaction with the quality and scope of training received, the survey evidence suggests that COFUND fellows are generally less satisfied on these points (77% of COFUND fellows quite or very satisfied with quality compared with 87% for IFs).

In terms of research outputs, only 7% of MCA fellows as a whole surveyed expect no change from the previous situation and about two-thirds expect to increase the number of joint or multiple publications and to enjoy long-lasting collaborations (see Table A6.27 in Annex 6). This finding appears to represent an improvement on FP6, where the previous evaluation reported a drop in this criterion between FP5 and FP6. Host institutions were also able to report significant positive impacts on research outputs, highlighting publications, presentations, networking effects, collaborations (with organisations linked through the fellow).

More than three-quarters of MCA fellows surveyed were very or quite satisfied with supervision arrangements, although almost 18% expressed some disappointment with this aspect (see Table A6.19 in Annex 6). However, this compares favourably with the survey findings from the FP6 Ex-post Impact Assessment, suggesting an improvement in this aspect in FP7. For MCA fellowships as a whole the

79 Although not directly comparable, in FP7 some 65% of respondents reported a likely positive effect on publications, compared with 50-60% for the FP6 data.

80 Page 35: only 35% of the views on the standard of project coordination or supervision were positive.
level of satisfaction with supervision appears to be high and no significant problems emerged from the in-depth interviews. Interactions with professors and research teams were reported as appropriate in most cases. In common with MCA as a whole, most COFUND fellows appear to find supervision satisfactory. NCPs agree that the quality of the MCA experience is generally good and, although problems with supervisors did arise, these were isolated.

Turning to satisfaction with access to research facilities, the survey results suggest this aspect is highly valued for its potential impact (73% rated it important or very important); and evidence from follow-up interviews with fellows indicates a high degree of satisfaction with the facilities of their host organisation, with some commenting that the facilities were “excellent” and “state of the art”. There was no evidence of any difference between COFUND and Individual Fellowships.

The survey evidence suggests satisfaction levels for the overall hosting experience are in general very high (97% were quite or very satisfied). More specifically, host organisations of Individual Fellows are particularly positive about the quality of the MCA fellows (98% were very satisfied) (see Table A6.38 in Annex 6). Notably, host institutions receiving only Individual Fellows are more positive about the quality of the fellows compared with the satisfaction levels of hosts receiving only COFUND fellows (although the overwhelming majority of hosts are still ‘very’ or ‘quite’ satisfied with both types of fellows).

Summary: effectiveness and utility

We were asked to consider a number of specific evaluation questions concerning the effectiveness and utility of COFUND and Individual Fellowships (the extent to which these are delivering on the objectives set). These are now addressed.

To what extent does Activity 2 of the People Programme achieve its general and specific objectives?

- To what extent has Activity 2 enhanced the career prospects of experienced researchers?
- To what extent has Activity 2 supported researchers in attaining and/or strengthening a leading independent position?
- To what extent has Activity 2 supported researchers to resume a research career after a break?
- To what extent has Activity 2 supported researchers to (re)integrate into a longer-term research position in Europe after a trans-national mobility experience?

**Enhancing the career prospects of experienced researchers and supported researchers in attaining and/or strengthening a leading independent position:** Participation in MCA fellowships has a range of positive effects on fellows’ careers and employability, including strong expectations that participating will increase fellows’ chances of moving to a more senior research role and obtaining a permanent position. These result from a combination of opening up access to wider opportunities (to work with leading research groups and/or in leading institutions, wherever these may be located geographically) and the provision of improved contractual conditions (for Individual Fellows in particular). A key element is the reputation and prestige associated with Individual Fellows in particular, which is
highly valued and which participants believe strongly has a beneficial impact on their career prospects. The prestige effect is less in evidence for COFUND.

Supporting researchers to resume a research career after a break: The evidence indicates that in practice the effectiveness of the MCA fellowships in assisting resumption of a research career after a break is very limited; and we know that immediately before taking up a fellowship most individuals worked in an HE institution or public research body. The survey also suggests very low numbers of fellows are motivated to participate as part of a strategy to return to research after a career break. A Career Restart Panel was introduced for IEF in 2010 to encourage researchers to resume research after a career break, although in the first year demand for this panel was relatively small in scale (around 100 applicants). It is difficult to assess the effectiveness of this approach, given the absence of a benchmark or target (such as that for the participation of women for example).

Supporting researchers to (re)integrate into a longer-term research position in Europe after a trans-national mobility experience: The way MCA fellowships are constructed has the effect of bringing greater stability into researchers’ careers: by offering fixed-term contracts for two years for example, across a range of research areas (where individuals are free to choose), while providing easier access to a wider range of research opportunities than might be available through national provision. Contractual and working conditions are encouraging experienced researchers to stay in or return to Europe and to attract researchers from outside Europe.

Does the geographical distribution of COFUND projects influence the mobility of individual researchers benefiting from co-funded programmes? If yes, how?

At this stage, the data available on COFUND host institutions and, in particular, the nationalities and destinations of COFUND fellows is very limited. However, early indications\(^1\) are that the geographical locations where COFUND programmes are located (in 15 out of the 27 EU Member States and two Associated Countries), has not significantly restricted the geographical mobility of fellows. Indeed, COFUND fellows have been hosted in 24 countries which can be compared with the 30 countries that have hosted Individual Fellows. Notably, whilst the UK dominates the hosting of Individual Fellows, early indications suggest that Germany is dominating in terms of hosting COFUND fellows.

To what extent has the fact of participating in COFUND changed operational and administrative procedures of the funded organisations?

a) openness of the scheme towards transnational and trans-sectoral mobility?

b) organisation of the evaluation and selection process:

- evaluation criteria;
- independent / international peer review;
- transparency and non-discrimination;
- judgment of merit;
- quality of application;

\(^1\) European Commission data from 50% of Call 1 programmes and 10% of Call 2 programmes (900 COFUND fellows in total)
success rates.

c) implementation of the principles set out in the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers?

d) equal opportunities.

The effect on administrative and operational procedures of COFUND beneficiaries is moderate overall, (about a third of beneficiaries reported making changes) but significant in a small number of cases, mostly new programmes. This applies in particular to increasing the openness of recruitment to transnational mobility and the use of independent/international peer review in selection processes (18% reported making significant changes in this area); which appears to be having benefits in terms of success rates (36% reporting moderate and 14% significant changes here). Moderate improvements in the transparency of procedures have also resulted from participation in COFUND. It is likely that those organisations that reported no change already have appropriate provision in place, so that the effect is to prompt a relatively small number of organisations to make improvements to bring them up to the general level.

Aspects that were less likely to have changed include the use of transparent evaluation criteria; assessing research proposals and consideration of equal opportunities criteria. The latter finding may be a result of the widespread appropriateness of pre-existing provision. For example, we know from the analysis of programme data that the proportion of female researchers in Individual Fellowships has been maintained (and even exceeded) in COFUND. There is no apparent discrimination in application and selection processes and the evidence suggests that during fellowships about two thirds of fellows were living with a partner/spouse (35% with children and 28.5% without). No significant differences were found between Individual Fellowships and COFUND in this respect, although COFUND fellows appear slightly less likely to have dependent children with them during the fellowship (28% compared with 37%).

Participation is also having an influence on some of the more strategic aspects of approaches that COFUND beneficiaries take to programme administration, particularly in the areas of: providing a more supportive research environment (23% reported a strong influence here), providing full employment contracts to researchers (23% were strongly influenced) and improving recruitment methods and appraisal systems (18% strongly influenced). Participation in COFUND is having less of an influence on a number of other areas including promoting equal opportunities and ensuring the portability of pension rights.

The European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for Recruitment of Researchers is widely known amongst COFUND beneficiaries and its influence appears fairly strong, particularly on programmes based on an existing fellowship activity (most of which appear to have made changes as a result). The survey results show that the procedures used by an overwhelming majority (86%) of COFUND beneficiary organisations reflect and/or are directly based on the principles set out in the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for Recruitment of Researchers. However, a significant proportion feel their procedures were already compliant.

To what extent have the objectives or programme modalities of the funding organisations participating in COFUND changed after being co-funded by MCA?
The extent to which funding organisations participating in COFUND have changed their objectives or programme modalities as a result of being co-funded by MCA is difficult to assess with any certainty. However, there is evidence that COFUND beneficiaries have been making modest changes to the objectives of existing programmes, as a result of their participation in the scheme.

When comparing co-funded programmes with similar programmes at national/regional/international level, how does the participation in COFUND influence the visibility of funded programmes and the organisations managing them? How successful are the co-funded programmes in attracting more and best quality researchers compared to other programmes at regional/national/international level?

Individual fellows, host organisations and COFUND beneficiaries all agree MCA as a whole is well known enjoys a high profile and prestigious reputation within Europe and the EU15 in particular. Synergy between COFUND and similar programmes operated by the same COFUND beneficiaries at national/regional/international level seem to lead to ‘spill-over’ effects in terms of increasing the visibility, quality and scope of other regional national programmes, connecting these to an international arena. COFUND beneficiaries are cautious about reporting improvements in attracting more and better quality researchers, compared with other programmes run by the organisation. Host institutions receiving only Individual Fellows are more positive about the quality of the fellows compared with the satisfaction levels of hosts receiving only COFUND fellows (although the overwhelming majority of hosts are still 'very' or 'quite' satisfied with both types of fellows).

What are the types and profiles of host institutions for fellows in co-funded programmes (e.g. commercial/non-commercial, universities/research institutes, where located)?

Preliminary data⁸², taken together with survey evidence suggests that about two-thirds of COFUND hosts are universities and a third are research organisations. This is broadly, comparable with the situation that applies to Individual Fellowships. COFUND fellows are being hosted by a number of the high-profile universities that participate in IFs (for example Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard and Yale). Drawing on the same data, COFUND fellows have so far been hosted in 24 countries, which can be compared with the 30 countries that have hosted Individual Fellows. Notably, whilst the UK dominates the hosting of Individual Fellows, early indications suggest that Germany is dominating in terms of hosting COFUND fellows.

Does hosting fellows from co-funded programmes affect administrative and operational procedures of host organisations? If yes, how?

The evidence suggests moderate organisational effects on COFUND hosts. Overall, about half of COFUND hosts are making changes across a range of indicators and are more likely to have made changes to operational and administrative procedures than IF hosts, notably in the areas of success rates for applications received, assessing the quality of applications, judging the merit/excellence of research proposals and transparency of procedures. Whilst typically 60-70% hosts of Individual Fellows report no change, only 40-50% of COFUND hosts do so. There are a number of possible explanations for this,

⁸² European Commission data from 50% of Call 1 programmes and 10% of Call 2 programmes (900 COFUND fellows in total)
including that there is little overlap between the types of organisations taking part in COFUND and Individuals Fellowships and that COFUND hosts are less experienced, 'new entrants' to MCA.

**What is the average time between the application stage and the selection/signature of the contract with the individual researcher for co-funded programmes and for Individual Fellowships?**

Most MCA fellows appear to wait for between two and six months between the call for applications and the grant being approved. Approximately two-thirds of MCA fellows then wait a maximum of six months before signing the contract, with three-quarters of fellows then moving to their institution within two months of signing the contract. The process for handling applications appear to be quicker for COFUND fellows compared with Individual Fellows.

**What is the level of difficulty perceived by researchers in getting funding from MC Individual Fellowships and co-funded programmes?**

High-quality, experienced researchers are facing few problems accessing MCA fellowships and most stakeholders consider recruitment to be open, fair and transparent. For COFUND specifically, application processes appear to be easier to understand and complete than is the case for IFs; and also compare favourably with other similar programmes (outside MCA). In all cases, participating institutions play a key role in providing support during the application processes. Informal methods of accessing MCA fellowships predominate (via personal networks and previous contacts with supervisors), although less so for COFUND. The wider range of strategies used by COFUND programmes for attracting fellows implies that COFUND fellowships are reaching a different group of researchers than MCA as a whole.

**What are the contractual and working conditions for researchers who participate in co-funded programmes and in the Marie Curie Individual Fellowships? Are they comparable? What are the main differences?**

Although overall the working conditions are satisfactory (being more or less in line with other positions the researchers have occupied), working and contractual conditions for COFUND fellows are less favourable than those that apply to IFs. They are also more variable, depending on the way individual programmes are structured and implemented. It is likely that these differences, at least in part, reflect differences in the remuneration mechanisms for fellows (within COFUND a relatively greater proportion of fellowships are provided in the form of stipends).

**Do COFUND fellows receive training in transferable skills (such as management, IPR, writing of proposals, entrepreneurship, etc.) similar to Marie Curie Individual Fellows? How far does this training meet the needs of researchers and what are the satisfaction levels?**

COFUND and IF hosts provide broadly comparable offers in terms of transferable skills, focusing on training in writing research reports, research management skills and writing research proposals; while wider management and administration, financial management and IPR management are considered less relevant. There is, therefore, a focus by fellows on core interests; but it may also reflect that (given the age profile) a proportion of the researchers involved have already acquired some experience and expertise in some of the more managerial competences. In common with MCA fellows as a whole, while not strictly a transferable skill, language training appeared to be the main form of training which has been
undertaken by COFUND fellows and most agreed it had been useful. Satisfaction with training is high for both modalities but COFUND fellows appear relatively less satisfied on this point.

To what extent does participation in co-funded programmes and in Individual Fellowships contribute to the development of researchers’ careers and to their employability, specifically by adding different and/or complementary research competences at an advanced level and by deepening career opportunities?

Across both modalities the opportunity to undertake more independent research (in several cases this extended to fellows establishing their own laboratories) is much sought after as a primary means of boosting career progression and is the dominant rationale for fellows to participate in MCA. COFUND fellows are just as likely as all MCA fellows to highlight the prestige of the fellowship as an important motivating factor. Fellows expect that participation will strengthen their research reputation and assist them to move to a more senior and permanent position. The majority consider that gaining access to better facilities, research environments and (more internationally-focused) networks provides significant benefits in terms of enhancing their career progression prospects. Having an international dimension is also seen as a very positive career move.

Fellows also value other factors that can help improve their career prospects: flexibility and freedom to pursue their own research interests and the relatively longer duration of some (COFUND) fellowships for example. The opportunity to extend their research or to change their field of research was also seen by fellows as an important benefit.

The evidence suggests many MCA fellows stay in their field of research after the grant has finished and that the potential for continuing research collaboration leading to increased research outputs is high. The future career plans of IFs and COFUND fellows are diverse, but can be broadly split between; those hoping to stay in their current institution, those wishing to return to their home country and those seeking international opportunities.
5.0 Efficiency and cost-effectiveness

Introduction

This section concerns how efficiently and cost-effective the inputs applied are converted into outputs. In the case of MCA fellowships, the primary outputs are the fellowships themselves and the majority of the EU support provided is applied to the grants that support these. First we consider the unit costs of fellowships before reviewing the study findings to highlight some broad findings concerning the duration of fellowships and administrative costs.

Unit costs of fellowships

The unit costs of fellowships are determined rather differently across the two modalities under Activity 2. For IFs the annual work programmes set out the various allowances (many of which are fixed), whilst in COFUND the average fellowship costs are subject to negotiations with the REA.

Based on the indicative budget for the period 2007-2009 (€475m) and the number of fellowships awarded during the same period (2,946), it is estimated that the average fellowship cost for IFs is approximately €161,00083.

With regards to COFUND, the average fellowships cost per fellow-year was €63,625 in 2007, increasing to €68,854 in 2010. Notably, there are significant variations across the three types of mobility, with the cost of re-integration and incoming fellows being substantially higher than that of outgoing fellows (Table 5.4). To a considerable extent this can be explained by the prominence of stipends rather than employment contracts within the outgoing type of mobility. Indeed, approximately half of all fellow-years in respect of outgoing mobility are based on stipends, compared with approximately a quarter of fellow-years in terms of incoming and re-integration mobility (Table 5.5). When taking into account differences in employment conditions across the types of mobility the variances in average fellowship costs are much less pronounced.

Table 5.1 COFUND average fellowship costs (per fellow-year)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outgoing mobility (€)</td>
<td>57,753</td>
<td>56,202</td>
<td>53,273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incoming mobility (€)</td>
<td>67,264</td>
<td>67,853</td>
<td>76,967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-integration mobility (€)</td>
<td>66,442</td>
<td>79,389</td>
<td>73,096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COFUND (average) (€)</td>
<td>63,625</td>
<td>65,131</td>
<td>68,854</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

83 A complete list of fellowships awarded in 2010 was not available for this evaluation study and thus could not be included in the calculation.
Management costs are allowed up to 7% of the total fellowship costs and the contribution to overheads is allowed up to a maximum of 10% of the total direct costs.

Table 5.2 Employment conditions (by type of mobility and fellow-years)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment contracts</th>
<th>Employment contracts or stipends</th>
<th>Stipends</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outgoing mobility</td>
<td>1129</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incoming mobility</td>
<td>2972</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-integration mobility</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As illustrated in Figure 5.1 below, the proportion of employment contracts awarded in COFUND has increased over the three calls, from some 58% to 68%. This trend has continued in 2011 with some 13% of Fellowships being offered as stipends. This may be explained by the fact that the proportion of outgoing fellowships, which are associated with a relatively higher proportion of stipends (account for more than half of all stipends), have fallen since the first call, whilst the proportion of incoming fellowships, which is associated with a relatively higher proportion of employment contracts, have increased. Notably, stipends do not preclude the accompanying offer of social protection. Moreover, it may be offered as a result of national legislation.

Figure 5.1 Employment conditions

![Figure 5.1 Employment conditions](image)

Table 5.6 below shows that the value of stipends represents approximately half of the value of employment contracts.

Source: European Commission
Table 5.3 Variances in average fellowship costs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mobility type</th>
<th>Employment conditions</th>
<th>Average fellowship costs (€/fellow-year)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outgoing</td>
<td>stipend</td>
<td>38912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>employment contract</td>
<td>73526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incoming</td>
<td>stipend</td>
<td>46005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>employment contract</td>
<td>83991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-integration</td>
<td>stipend</td>
<td>51494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>employment contract</td>
<td>74660</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: European Commission; the analysis does not include programmes where the employment conditions have not been specified.

As noted above, average fellowship costs tend to vary across the COFUND programmes due to the employment conditions offered (and to a lesser extent the type of mobility). However, there are also variances in average fellowship costs across the participating countries (Figure 5.2). To some extent, these differences can be explained by whether the programmes award stipends or employment contracts. Notably, stipends appear to be particularly popular to award in Austria, Germany and Italy. Although the differences are also likely to reflect national differences in salary levels, which may explain the relatively high fellowships costs in Sweden, Switzerland, Ireland and the UK. Perhaps, with the exception of Estonia, differences in costs between EU15 and EU12 countries do not appear to be significant.

Figure 5.2 Average fellowship costs (by country of beneficiary organisation)

Source: European Commission
Whilst recognising that the cost estimates for Individual Fellowships and COFUND fellowships presented above are not directly comparable, it would appear that there are no significant differences in terms of the average value of fellowships/grants provided across the two modalities. Assuming that there are no significant differences in terms of the quality of researchers across the two modalities and given that the European Commission only contributes to approximately 40% of the COFUND fellowship costs, it can be suggested that COFUND is more cost-effective than Individual Fellowship. However, this should not be taken as a push to replace Individual Fellowships with COFUND. Rather, they should continue to co-exist to ensure that the reputation and prestige of Individual Fellowships remains, whilst also ensuring volume and structuring effects through COFUND.

Importantly, for both COFUND and Individual Fellows, a significant majority of fellows consider the level of funding to be about right or generous. Indeed, the survey results suggest that the overwhelming majority of fellows considered the level of funding for living costs to be about right (41% Individual Fellows and 53% COFUND fellows) or generous (40% Individual Fellows and 26% COFUND fellows). Similarly for research costs, the level of funding available was considered to be about right (39% Individual Fellows and 44% COFUND fellows) or generous (28% Individual Fellows and 15% COFUND fellows) by a majority of fellows. This suggests that whilst the majority of fellows are satisfied with the level of funding, a slightly larger proportion of fellows consider the level of funding for research costs to be slightly low or inadequate, compared with the level of funding for living costs.

Notably, with regards to Individual Fellows a substantially lower proportion of IRG and ERG fellows were satisfied with the level of funding for living and research costs, whilst IEF fellows were most satisfied with the level of funding. It is also notable that Individual Fellows that are involved in lab-based research, including life sciences, engineering and physics, appear to be significantly less satisfied with the funding available for research costs.

With regards to COFUND fellows, the survey results suggest that the inadequacy of research cost funding is largely limited to a few programmes rather than a more general issue. Moreover, a majority of those who consider the research costs to be inadequate tend to be outgoing fellows.

Programme implementation

5.1.1 Selection processes

Based on interviews with the Chairs of the research panels (Individual Fellowships and COFUND), the process of appointing external evaluators appear to be efficient, fair and transparent. The quality of evaluators overall also appear to be high and where possible the evaluators’ expertise are matched with the research areas proposed in the applications. This view is shared by the NCPs, although some isolated issues where raised concerning the subject knowledge of some of the evaluators. There were also some comments that large and prestigious universities were favoured by the evaluators.

Evidence from the chairs of the research panels also suggest that the evaluators are given appropriate information and facilities to carry out the assessments effectively and within the time allotted. The online evaluation tool (RIvET) was, however, identified as slowing the process down slightly. Some additional time to assess the proposals was also mentioned as potentially being beneficial in terms of ensuring that
the best proposals are being selected. Notably, the evaluation process for COFUND programmes and Individual Fellowships are slightly different in that the evaluators for COFUND are carrying out the assessments in Brussels, whilst the IFs are assessed remotely and then discussed in Brussels. Both systems appear to be working well and tend to reflect the number of applications received.

In terms of the selection of researchers, the award procedures and mechanisms for COFUND or Individual Fellowships are rather different. For example, in terms of the Individual Fellowships, the selection process, whilst using a range of external evaluators, is managed centrally by the REA. By contrast, the selection process in the COFUND programmes is decentralised and managed by the individual COFUND programme beneficiaries. As such, the REA do not have any direct management control of the selection processes in the COFUND programmes. However, as 30% of the evaluation score of COFUND programmes relates to the quality of the selection process for fellows under the programme, it can be expected that the REA (or more precisely the external evaluators) have indirect control of the selection processes to be used by the COFUND programmes. Although, clearly, the external evaluators can only base their assessment on the information contained in the application and as such there is an important role for the REA to ensure that the process and procedures proposed in the application are implemented accordingly. However, with the resources currently available to REA it is not possible for staff members to act as independent observers during the evaluation of proposals in the COFUND programmes. Moreover, when members of the REA team visit the COFUND programmes (generally halfway through the programme) it is often too late to make any changes to the selection processes as most of the calls have been closed and evaluated.

The evidence from the surveys demonstrates that the award procedures and mechanisms used by COFUND beneficiaries for selecting researchers for COFUND fellowship generally consist of an application process, multiple peer/committee reviews and panels (mostly independent and international) and short-listing. These mechanisms are considered satisfactory to ensure the excellence of the researchers receiving grants, particularly by having experienced, international and independent evaluators and panel members.

There is some evidence that the participation in COFUND has significantly influenced some programme beneficiaries' award procedures and mechanisms. For example, based on the survey results, approaching a quarter (22.7%) of all programmes suggests that COFUND has had a strong influence on improving recruitment methods and appraisal systems (see Table A6.49 in Annex 6). Specifically, the survey results suggest that the most significant changes in terms of the operational and administrative procedures relate to the use of independent/international peer review and the openness of recruitment towards transnational (and trans-sectoral) mobility. Moderate changes are also evident in respect of the transparency of procedures (Table 5.9). The fact that a majority of programmes report that COFUND has not influenced operational and administrative procedures should not be seen as a failure, rather it should be interpreted as a levelling up of the quality standards used across Europe, with many programmes already adhering to the quality standards set out in the Code of Conduct for the recruitment of researchers.

Table 5.4 Changes to operational and administrative procedures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Openness of recruitment to the scheme towards transnational and trans-sectoral mobility?</th>
<th>Significantly</th>
<th>Moderately</th>
<th>No Change</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>61.4%</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of transparent evaluation criteria</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>70.5%</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of independent / international peer review</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judgment of merit/excellence of research proposal</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessing the quality of applications received</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success rates of applications received</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consideration of equal opportunities criteria in assessing applications</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>77.3%</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency of procedures</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>65.9%</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>97.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The European Commission and REA set out the appropriate guidance and rules that should apply to COFUND programme selection processes. Subsequently, most beneficiaries do not seek advice from EAC/REA: some 16% had taken note of advice but 68% had either not taken advice or were unaware it was available (see Table A6.67 in Annex 6).

### 5.1.2 Problems with contracts and payments

Based on the follow-up interviews with the fellows, the majority do not report any problems concerning the contractual process. Although amongst the small minority that did, there were a number of common issues; including the length of the delay between the fellowship being awarded and actually starting the fellowship and delays in initial payments. Notably, in most cases these issues relate to the Individual Fellows administered by the REA, rather than COFUND fellows. In most cases the problems have been resolved both in the short term (e.g. by the institution supporting the fellow temporarily) and in the longer term by the REA. There were also some specific examples of issues relating to the relationship between the fellow and the host institutions (e.g. a host institution not paying the full Marie Curie fellowships amount as a salary, but giving the additional money as a lump sum at the end of the project which was heavily taxed).

From the perspective of the host institutions, the follow-up interviews reveal that there were significant challenges immediately after the REA obtained full autonomy of the implementation of the People specific programme in the summer of 2009. For example, the host institutions report that there are some issues concerning the speed at which REA are processing payments and responding to queries, although REA’s performance has improved over time.

### 5.1.3 Duration of fellowships

The duration of each type of MCA fellowship is set within the programme and reflects the specific goal of each (for example re-integration grants are for a maximum of four years compared with the typical grant of up to two years for most of the other grants). The duration of fellowships tend to vary across the various instruments, with most IOF and RG fellowships lasting for more than 24 months and IEF and IIF generally lasting 19-24 months. The duration of fellowships in COFUND is also varied; whilst nearly half of fellowships last for 19-24 months, more than a fifth last for 6-12 months and a quarter last for more than 24 months. Notably, and in contrast to some COFUND fellowships, Individual Fellowships rarely last for 12 months or less.
With regard to the length of the fellowships, the survey results suggest that almost half of MCA fellows would find it useful if the fellowship lasted another six months to a year. Nevertheless, the other half of fellows state the length of the fellowship is about right (Table 5.9).

Table 5.5 Duration of Fellowships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MCA fellows</th>
<th>Individual Fellows</th>
<th>COFUND fellows</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Too long</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About right</td>
<td>49.7%</td>
<td>49.7%</td>
<td>49.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another 6 months would be/would have been helpful</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another year would be/would have been helpful</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of respondents</td>
<td>1881</td>
<td>1380</td>
<td>501</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ecorys Survey

Exploring this issue through follow-up interviews with MCA fellows indicates general satisfaction with the duration and suggests certain advantages over other schemes: “...in Italy it was difficult to find any position that lasted for more than one year” (follow-up interview). There is also a moderate tendency to believe a longer duration (three instead of two years) would be better. Not surprisingly there are differences between MCA instruments: the moderate desire for an additional year to complete the research required being most prevalent amongst IEF and IIF fellows, while for reintegration fellowships (mostly lasting for four years), fellows were much happier about the duration. COFUND fellows are slightly less likely than IFs to suggest extending fellowships from two to three years. COFUND fellows may be more satisfied with this aspect, since the greater flexibility in COFUND programmes. COFUND programmes are allowed to run for up to 60 months (48 months up until 2011) although the Fellowships awarded must be implemented (selected, started and executed) within the time frame of the grant agreement concluded with the REA. None of the respondents felt that the MCA fellowships lasted too long, indicating that the duration of fellowships are appropriate.

Importantly, the majority of host organisations consider the duration of MCA fellowships to be “about right”. Notably, with the re-integration grants lasting up to four years, these fellows appeared to be much more satisfied with the duration. The above evidence also appears to be confirmed by the host institutions and NCPs consulted, although some NCPs suggested that more flexible fellowships would be welcome, in particular in terms of the time spent at the host institution, as this would fit in better with the variations in requirements of different subject areas (for example where research does not involve access to equipment for prolonged periods), and family (particularly for women) and other commitments (e.g. financial).

5.1.4 Monitoring

Just like other FP7 projects, beneficiaries (COFUND and IFs) are requested to provide a periodic report as well as a final report through SESAM, the European Commission online reporting tool for Research and Technological projects. Feedback received by the REA from COFUND beneficiaries suggests that the beneficiaries have had some difficulties in completing the various components of SESAM. In particular, COFUND beneficiaries appear to have difficulties in judging what information to provide for each section, with some beneficiaries providing information that is not relevant. In response to this, the REA have provided beneficiaries with further guidance and explanation, which can be expected to
improve the relevance of the information provided and the efficiency at which it is being completed by the beneficiaries.

Whilst the overall reporting requirements for COFUND beneficiaries (as set out in Article 3 and Article II.3 of the FP7 Marie Curie Grant Agreement) have remained the same since the introduction of COFUND, with a periodic and a final report being submitted to the REA, there have been some changes in terms of the mid-term interim progress report requirements. Indeed, at the start COFUND beneficiaries were requested to provide information about each experienced researcher supported (including in terms of gender, nationality, duration, contractual status, location of where activities had taken place, type of mobility, etc) at the end of each reporting period. However, as a result of some delays in programmes being operationalised (partly due to the time required to negotiate the average fellowship costs) and with a majority of programmes lasting for 48 months, this has resulted in the REA having relatively limited information concerning the specific outputs of each COFUND programme. In response to this, REA have subsequently amended the provisions in Annex III of the FP7 Marie Curie Grant Agreement, requesting COFUND beneficiaries to submit a researcher registration report within 20 days of selection of the researcher, following a specific layout produced and communicated by the REA. This can be expected to ensure that the REA have detailed information about each researcher much sooner than during the previous arrangements.

In terms of the financial reporting, feedback received by the REA suggests that the beneficiaries are very pleased about not having to provide (invoices and so on). Co-funding from the EC is provided on the basis of the average fellowship cost agreed during the negotiation phase and thus does not require that any further evidence of costs are provided.

The consultations with COFUND beneficiaries undertaken for this study provides mixed evidence concerning the monitoring and reporting arrangements, with some COFUND beneficiary organisations alluding to the simplicity of reporting and monitoring arrangements, whilst others are complaining about the time needed to meet the requirements. Notably, a large proportion of the COFUND beneficiary organisations surveyed noted that it is too early to comment on the monitoring arrangements.

Administrative burden

Administrative costs are defined by the European Commission as costs incurred by organisations or individuals in meeting obligations to provide information on their activities, either to public authorities or to private parties, including costs of reporting, monitoring and assessment needed to provide the information. Some of this information would be collected and provided even if legal obligations were suppressed, whilst other administrative activities are only pursued because of legal obligations. The latter costs and activities are therefore referred to as administrative burdens.

5.1.5 COFUND programme management

The result of the follow-up interviews with the COFUND programme beneficiaries supports the suggestion that there are significant costs associated with establishing a programme, particularly during the negotiation phase. Some COFUND programme beneficiaries also note that that covering all types of mobility makes the programme more difficult to manage and administer.
The survey evidence indicates that for more than half of the organisations delivering COFUND programmes, the implementation of the COFUND programme has increased costs, although not excessively. About a third of organisations state that the costs are comparable to other types of awards (Table 5.3). It was indicated by some of the stakeholders consulted that the costs of evaluating submitted proposals represent a significant expense, with some rare examples of calls being cancelled as a result. Clearly, there is also a need for programme beneficiary organisations to appoint a dedicated programme manager for the COFUND programmes. Those few programmes that have considered it to have been extremely costly are relatively small programmes that did not exist before.

Table 5.6 Costs of implementing the COFUND programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Incoming</th>
<th>Outgoing</th>
<th>Re-integration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is not very costly at all</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The costs are about equal to our other types of awards</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It has increased our costs, but not excessively</td>
<td>56.8%</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is extremely costly</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of respondents</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ecorys Survey

Whilst recognising the increased costs associated with the COFUND programmes, more than three-quarters of COFUND programme organisations state that the costs are justified by the benefits. A fifth estimate that the costs are significantly less than the benefits, whilst only one programme operator stated that the costs are greater than the benefits (Table 5.4).

Table 5.7 Costs and benefits (COFUND beneficiary organisations)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Incoming</th>
<th>Outgoing</th>
<th>Re-integration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The costs are significantly less than the benefits</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The costs are justified by the benefits</td>
<td>77.3%</td>
<td>73.0%</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The costs are greater than the benefits</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of respondents</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ecorys Survey

5.1.6 Host organisations

Hosts that have received both COFUND fellows and Individual Fellows find the administrative burden of COFUND fellowships is slightly greater than that connected to Individual Fellowships (43% of hosts finds the administrative burden of COFUND fellowships greater than Individual Fellowships; 36% find it about the same). Around a fifth of hosts perceive the administrative burden of COFUND to be lower in comparison with the Individual Fellowships modality (Table 5.2).

Table 5.8 Administrative burden (host organisations)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>COFUND only</th>
<th>COFUND and IFs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The administrative burden of COFUND fellowships is greater</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The administrative burden of COFUND fellowships is the same</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The administrative burden of COFUND fellowships is lower

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>27.7%</th>
<th>36.8%</th>
<th>21.4%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of respondents</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Ecorys Survey*

It is important to note here, however, that the respondents who consider the administrative burden to be greater for COFUND than IFs are almost exclusively host institutions that are also responsible for managing COFUND programmes. As such, it is likely that their response to the survey reflect the administrative burden of the COFUND programme rather than hosting the fellows per se. In recognition of this, the survey results would indicate that the administrative burden of hosting COFUND fellows compared with IFs are about the same (or even lower).

Host institutions felt that, on average, the costs of hosting MCA fellows are justified by the benefits: they are even inclined towards a positive cost-benefit ratio (i.e. the costs are significantly less than the benefits). In total, only 10% of hosts find that the costs were greater than the benefits.

### Table 5.9 Costs and benefits (Host organisations)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>COFUND only</th>
<th>COFUND and IFs</th>
<th>IFs only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The costs are significantly less than the benefits</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The costs are justified by the benefits</td>
<td>62.4%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>76.0%</td>
<td>62.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The costs are greater than the benefits</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The costs are significantly greater than the benefits</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of respondents</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>416</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Ecorys Survey*

Notwithstanding this generally positive message concerning the cost-benefit ratio, there are frequent complaints by the host institutions concerning the administrative cost of MCA fellows. Some of the specific comments include: 'the administrative cost of hosting Marie Curie Fellows is not covered by the contribution to overheads'; 'the Marie Curie fellows require more time from administrative staff than other researchers'; 'the contribution to overheads do not cover our real expenses…much administrative capacity is required for the negotiation process once the grant is given'; 'the actual costs of researcher in salary and overhead is 30% greater than the MC grant per year'; 'the difference between the fellowship and the direct costs of the position is being compensated by the Research Council of Norway, in the order of €10,000 per year…additional direct costs may occur, which are borne by the institute…indirect costs in the form of administrative overhead are most likely'; 'the administrative burden is greater than other fellowships'. Notably, the guidance on the contribution towards management costs and overheads have been changed recently to a flat rate of €700 per researcher (per month) to which the correction factor is applied, although the total amount of the contribution cannot exceed 20% of total direct costs.

Overall, and taking into account consultations interviews with NCPs, there is no evidence that the administrative burden is disproportionate to other similar programmes.
Summary: efficiency and cost-effectiveness

We were asked to consider a number of specific evaluation questions concerning the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of Activities 2 and 4. These are now addressed.

Is the duration of supported projects and the size of the budget per Action (Individual Fellowships and COFUND) and per co-funded beneficiary in a call appropriate and proportionate to the overall objectives set for Individual Fellowships and COFUND?

Most IOF and RG fellowships last for more than 24 months and IEF and IIF generally last 19-24 months. The duration of fellowships in COFUND is also varied; whilst nearly half of fellowships last for 19-24 months, more than a fifth last for 6-12 months and a quarter last for more than 24 months. Notably, and in contrast to some COFUND fellowships, Individual Fellowships rarely last for 12 months or less.

The majority of host organisations consider the duration of MCA fellowships to be “about right” and there is general satisfaction with the duration amongst fellows, with a moderate tendency to believe a longer duration (three instead of two years) may be beneficial. There was no evidence that the MCA fellowships last too long.

There is some evidence to suggest a desire for more flexible fellowships, in particular in terms of the time spent at the host institution (within the overall fellowship period), as this would fit in better with the variations in requirements of different subject areas (for example where research does not involve access to equipment for prolonged periods), and family (particularly for women) and other commitments (e.g. financial). However, this would require careful consideration, given the potential complexities of implementation.

To what extent do the mechanisms applied in COFUND for selecting individual researchers guarantee the excellence of researchers receiving grants? How do they compare to Individual Fellowships?

The selection process for Individual Fellowships is managed centrally by the REA while the selection process in the COFUND programmes is managed by the individual COFUND programme beneficiaries. As such, the REA does not have direct management control of the selection processes in the COFUND programmes. Mechanisms applied in COFUND programmes appear to be satisfactory and COFUND hosts are satisfied with the results. There is no evidence that the outcome is a cause for concern: host institutions receiving only Individual Fellows are more positive about the quality of the fellows (74% very satisfied) compared with the satisfaction levels of hosts receiving only COFUND fellows, but the overwhelming majority of hosts are still 'very' or 'quite' satisfied with both types of fellows.

To what extent do the Commission and the Research Executive Agency (REA) fulfil the guiding role in the process of selection of researchers in co-funded programmes? What are the areas for improvement?

Beyond setting the rules at the application stage the European Commission and REA do not subsequently play a strong guiding role in the process of selecting of researchers in COFUND fellowship programmes. Equally there is no evidence that this gap is having any significant negative impact on the quality of selection procedures.
Are the monitoring arrangements of Activity 2 appropriate? What are areas for improvement?

Monitoring of Individual Fellowships follows FP7 procedures and is relatively straightforward given that it is a centralised action where details of the fellows and their activities are known from the start. Monitoring de-centralised actions poses a different set of challenges and for COFUND standard MCA/FP7 arrangements have needed to be adapted accordingly. Mid-term visits to COFUND programmes have proved beneficial and the introduction from the end of 2011 of a new system (the Researchers Registration Report) will allow for closer and timelier overall programme management information.

A large proportion of the COFUND beneficiary organisations surveyed noted that it is too early to comment on the monitoring arrangements. Among the other COFUND beneficiary organisations there is mixed evidence concerning the monitoring and reporting arrangements, with some COFUND beneficiary organisations alluding to the simplicity of reporting and monitoring arrangements, whilst others are complaining about the time needed to meet the requirements.

Overall, there is nothing to suggest that the monitoring arrangements are inappropriate. The introduction of the Researchers Registration Report for COFUND should serve to provide closer and timelier overall programme management information without representing an additional burden on the beneficiaries.

How cost-effective is COFUND in comparison with Marie Curie Individual Fellowships in terms of administrative costs of implementation?

Implementing a COFUND programme carries a significant (especially set-up) cost, but this is not considered excessive by most beneficiaries and is justified by the benefits. In terms of administering fellowships themselves the indications are that the administrative burden of hosting COFUND fellows compared with IFs is about the same (or even lower). Overall, there is no evidence that the administrative burden for COFUND is disproportionate when compared with other similar programmes.

What is the degree of cost-effectiveness of Activity 2 of the People Programme? Could the same results be achieved with a smaller budget? Could the use of other instruments or measures have provided better cost-effectiveness?

In terms of the overall Activity 2 budget this appears to be appropriate at the current time, based on success rates. It is unlikely similar results could be delivered with a smaller budget.

COFUND provides for greater cost-effectiveness by virtue of the leverage effects of a co-funding mechanism but delivers comparatively slightly fewer benefits than Individual Fellowships in terms of working conditions and quality of researchers (although overall these are satisfactory).

Data on unit costs suggests that on average remuneration for Individual Fellowships is slightly higher than for COFUND fellowships – around €80,000 per fellowship year for a typical two-year Individual Fellowship.

84 Administrative costs are defined by the European Commission as costs incurred by organisations or individuals in meeting obligations to provide information on their activities, either to public authorities or to private parties, including costs of reporting, monitoring and assessment needed to provide the information.
compared with around €70,000 per fellowship year for COFUND (based on total cost where the EU provides a contribution of 40%). On average the employment conditions of Individual Fellows are also slightly better, making working conditions for them generally better. There are a number of reasons for this difference, including the effects of geography (concentration of Individual Fellowships in countries with higher living costs for example); and the relative prevalence of stipends in COFUND (in comparison with Individual Fellowships), which lowers the average remuneration level. There are certain advantages attached to the use of employment contracts, which are linked to the MCA principle of encouraging better working conditions. In practice, stipends are relatively rare within Individual Fellowships and are used in around one third of COFUND fellowships approved in the first three calls (of the stipends used in COFUND around half concern outgoing mobility grants), and a declining trend for stipends is evident for the 2011 Call.

In terms of COFUND, it is worth noting that the maximum contribution for COFUND has been increased from €5 million to €10 million (from 2011) without a significant increase in the indicative budget for this mechanism (€90 million in 2011). This will tend to mean that a much smaller number of organisations will benefit from COFUND. In theory, the number of participating organisation could be more than halved (taking into account the increase in budget for 2011) and larger organisations (including international and national funding agencies) will account for a greater proportion of COFUND funding, as these are the organisations that are most likely to be able to meet the co-funding requirement associated with the EU contribution. While larger, more strategic organisations are more likely to deliver structuring effects, the potential disadvantage might be a loss of diversity and the dominance of a relatively small number of players. On balance this risk is small, given the ceilings applied. However, restricting repeat funding in some way may be advisable.
6.0 Sustainability

Introduction

The sustainability of MCA Activities 2 and 4 will depend on a number of factors. For example the MCA fellowships programme must continue to maintain its strong profile and brand identity and attract high quality researchers and research institutions. Accessibility to the opportunities it provides will need to be maintained and perhaps developed further, to start to exploit the latent demand. The issue of funding of course, is central to the consideration of a sustainable future for MCA. In part it is also a question of how learning from hosts, researchers and COFUND programmes can be exploited.

Visibility of MCA fellowships

Evidence from the online survey suggested that the vast majority of MCA fellows (97%) considered MCA fellowships to be well known in their research field (see Table A6.23 in Annex 6) and an overwhelming 96% of MCA fellows were aware that the source of the funding was the EU. The survey does suggest that MCA fellowships are less well known in the social sciences and economic fields than other fields (for example 63% very well known in the life sciences field versus 22% in social sciences) (see Table A6.24 in Annex 6). This corresponds to the relative dominance of life sciences in MCA. The majority of all respondents (97%) thought MCA fellowships were moderately to very well known in their institution (see Table A6.34 in Annex 6). In general, respondents find that MCA fellowships as a whole are quite visible, except outside the EU.

The in-depth consultations confirmed that in terms of visibility across all the research fields, Marie Curie Fellowships are generally well known, but fellows agreed with the statement that Marie Curie was better known in Life Sciences than Social Sciences. This was confirmed by in-depth interviews with the hosts which suggest that MCA is better known in certain fields than in others, in life sciences more so than in social sciences for example. One interviewee took the view that: "Natural and life sciences are more up to date with European funding generally"; and that "...in science going abroad is structurally embedded and seen as a natural career move." Another host noted that "Programme documentation and promotional materials emphasise the life sciences whereas only 'one bullet' refers to social sciences. It may give an impression that the programme gives priority to the life sciences."

In terms of geographical visibility, the evidence from the in-depth consultations suggests that if the fellow’s previous host and current host were both based in the EU then Marie Curie Fellowships were as well known in both institutions. However, if the fellow was previously based in, for example, the US they reported that MCA fellowships are much less well known there than in the EU or Israel. The evidence also suggests that MCA fellowships have a relatively low profile outside the research and higher education sphere.

The survey evidence suggests that the most significant difference in terms of the degree to which individuals are aware that funding is provided by the EU: practically all Individual Fellows were aware of this, compared with 84% for COFUND fellows. This seems to suggest that although it might be argued
that the co-funded mechanism implies less direct contact with and awareness of the EU element, the link still appears strong.

Although there was no significant difference in the responses of COFUND fellows compared with MCA fellows overall, hosts receiving only Individual Fellows were somewhat more positive about the visibility of MCA than those receiving COFUND fellows only. When we compare the visibility of COFUND programmes versus MCA as a whole, we find that MCA (as a whole) scores higher than the COFUND programmes in all fields.

The in-depth consultations confirmed that COFUND was less well known than Marie Curie as a concept amongst the research community. This is likely to be attributable to the length of time the Individual Fellowships have existed in comparison to the COFUND programme. In terms of geographic visibility, COFUND seems to be better known at a regional level compared to a national level but otherwise the visibility pattern mirrors the feedback on Individual Fellowships; the programme is better known in the EU than in Third Countries such as the US, Australia and Russia.

Overall, the evidence from the NCPs would suggest that there is plenty of information available; although it is not always that easy to navigate the various portals and websites and therefore NCPs have an important role in ensuring that the information available is accessible. NCPs on the whole felt that the information has improved in recent years as the annual work programme which is produced in FP7 makes it easier to plan.

**Future development of COFUND**

The future development of co-funded programmes is an issue of critical interest to the European Commission. This concerns both issues of continued funding but also how synergies and collaboration between COFUND programmes and indeed between hosts of both Individual Fellowships and COFUND fellowships can be increased and used as a driver for increases in scale and scope.

Potentially reflecting the perceived cost-effectiveness of the COFUND programmes, half of the programme organisations state that it would be 'likely' or 'highly likely' that their COFUND fellowship programmes could be sustained and developed further without EU funding. Although the other half of the programme organisations state that it would be 'highly unlikely' that their programme could be sustained and developed further without EU funding (see Table A6.68 in Annex 6).

In terms of what conditions would be required to facilitate further development of COFUND programmes without EU support, COFUND beneficiaries emphasise a need for more national and local funding.

About two-thirds of COFUND beneficiaries appear to have had opportunities to learn from the experience of others and the vast majority thought there is a need to communicate and exchange best practices among COFUND programmes at different levels and in different countries (see Table A6.69 in Annex 6). Many commented that more meetings, conferences and workshops would facilitate this and would be welcome. This is confirmed by the in-depth consultations with COFUND beneficiaries which suggest they would appreciate the opportunity to interact and communicate more with organisations of other COFUND programmes: they felt this would enable them to share experiences and practical tips. Workshops and
exchanges of experience through internet communication were also suggested. Consultees felt this would be important not only for existing programmes but also for prospective COFUND applicants. NCPs agreed that promoting the exchange of best practice would certainly be beneficial particularly for those countries that have not yet co-funded a transnational programme.

NCPs suggested that the quality of the COFUND programmes is improving, as many programmes went through a learning curve over the first few years. Consultees said that it was important to allow countries enough time to set up programmes, which means they need work programmes (including budgets and eligibility criteria) well in advance of the application deadline, particularly as it can take time to get the required match funding.

Evidence on COFUND from a range of hosts suggests a mixed picture, where some find it unattractive, while others are keen to apply in future although several highlight that this will require an appropriate organisation to take the lead (a potential COFUND application in Northern England appears to have foundered for this reason). Those with direct experience of COFUND could see advantages in terms of increasing institutional visibility but one was concerned it did not “...generate a coherent programme, as the different post docs all go off to different groups. This could be improved by recruiting people at the same time and doing more in common, especially on the social non-work side and to help them with moving their partners/ families too”.

Responses from COFUND beneficiaries to the possibility of opening COFUND to commercial organisations (as beneficiaries and hosts) are mixed. Some considered it would bring closer collaboration between industry and HE institutions and between the public and private sectors. Others thought it would be very challenging and reservations were expressed concerning dealing with complicated IPR issues and the risk of losing independence and flexibility (in research terms). Overall, views were slightly favourable towards opening participation but further research is required before any conclusions can be drawn on this issue.

We also note that it has been proposed that all four Individual Fellowships (IEF, IIF, IOF and CIG) should be streamlined into a single instrument (career development of experienced researchers) in Horizon 2020\(^{85}\). Whilst there is already some degree of flexibility within the indicative budgets, a streamlining of instruments is likely to ensure that the funding supports the best researchers and is more responsive to researchers’ needs. Indeed, there are currently some variations in terms of the score required to obtain funding, with researchers obtaining funding under ERG (RG) with relatively lower scores (albeit still above the quality threshold of 70) than the other instruments.

**Summary: sustainability**

We were asked to consider a number of specific evaluation questions concerning the sustainability of Activities 2 and 4. These are now addressed.

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\(^{85}\) European Commission, 2011, Marie Curie Actions in Horizon 2020: Workshop with country representatives – summary report
What are the conditions under which the co-funded programmes are likely to develop further without the EU support?

The evidence suggests that about half of COFUND programmes might continue without EU funding, with the most common alternative support being additional funding from national and regional governments. The issue of potentially limiting repeat funding in some way has been discussed elsewhere and is also relevant here.

What is the visibility of Activity 2 funding: to the general public and to researchers supported by Individual Fellowships and by co-funded programmes? Is the information about available funding in both implementation modalities of Activity 2 easily accessible, transparent and updated? Are the programmes well known in the research community?

MCA fellowships enjoy a high profile in Europe, across a range of research fields and in many institutions, although it is much better known in the life sciences field than in social sciences and economics. However, the visibility and profile of MCAs appears limited outside the research and higher education arena. The COFUND programme is less well known than MCAs as a whole, but some evidence suggests that its profile in some regions of the in EU is high. MCAs are less well known outside Europe than within.

Is there a need to communicate and exchange best practices among co-funded programmes at different levels (regional/national/international) and in different countries? How can the communication methods be improved?

Most COFUND beneficiaries are keen to benefit from more exchange of learning and best practice between programmes and with MCA hosts, suggestions include workshops and internet communication. It was felt more cooperation would benefit potential COFUND applicants significantly. It is clear from the evidence that participating organisations are ‘learning by doing’ and there is, therefore, a need to capture the lessons from this.

How can the synergies and interaction between COFUND and Individual Fellowships and among co-funded programmes be improved?

We have concluded that COFUND and Individual Fellowships are complementary mechanisms – as such there are synergies that might be exploited, although these are much more likely to be relevant among COFUND programmes, in particular in terms of learning from the experience of others, benchmarking the quality of various programme parameters (for example training, contractual conditions and employability). This will also help to raise awareness of COFUND.
7.0 Added value

Definition

We were asked to consider the added value of COFUND for the EU, including comparing the benefits for researchers and research organisations with Individual Fellowships, and whether COFUND has resulted in any impact on the fragmentation of funding opportunities in Europe; has succeeded in making national and regional funding opportunities more open to international mobility; and is contributing to the objectives of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

Added value might include consideration of the following under the general goal of building the capacity and capability of individuals, organisations, countries and regions through: increased networking effects, for example, through more efficient and effective interactions between EU and national/regional/local organisations; career progression (enhanced professional development) through trans-national experience (where there is insufficient supply of opportunities emanating from national level); increased knowledge sharing through inter-thematic and inter-organisational engagement; better structuring of training/learning environments; and scale and quality of outputs.

In particular, these benefits may be considered in the context of 'EU added value' as defined by the EU Budget Review, which suggests that the EU dimension can maximise the efficiency of Member States finances, and help to pool common services and resources to secure economies of scale. The EU budget should therefore be used to finance:

1. EU public goods;
2. Actions that Member States and regions cannot finance themselves; or
3. The achievement of better results.

The evidence suggests that Marie Curie Activity 2 and Activity 4 meet these criteria, in particular where the benefits in terms of increased opportunities, competences, employability, networking effects, knowledge sharing and structuring are considered to be public goods, which are tackling strategic EU challenges.

The main specific added value effects are as follows.

Action at EU level

In terms of the specific issue of the value of the EU carrying out MCA instead of Member States, the EU is better placed to deliver the benefits described above for a number of reasons, including: the relative cost-effectiveness and economies of scale of having a single management and administration system (for MCA and COFUND, if for the latter we think about the programme level where common objectives and procedures are set for COFUND via the application and section process); and the capacity for an EU-
wide scheme to offer a much wider range of research mobility opportunities, by, for example, MCA's openness in terms of subject areas (a less common feature of national schemes) and ability to achieve a higher level of visibility and awareness across all Member States (including via word-of-mouth and the building of a significant body of alumni).

**Internationalisation**

In terms of the international dimension, and the benefits of participating in MCA, the consultation evidence does not indicate any appreciable differences between COFUND and MCA as a whole: many of the COFUND fellows interviewed suggested the international dimension and the research dimension are equally important, although overall more fellows seemed to suggest research was the primary motivation. The way that the COFUND mechanism has been designed also has the potential to support actions that add value to regional and national programmes, by providing further opportunities for international mobility. Indeed, around half of the COFUND programmes represent existing programmes that have been adapted to include transnational mobility. There is, therefore, a strong case to suggest that this level of internationalisation would not have been achieved without EU intervention. COFUND can also be seen to assist in aligning and coordinating regional and national funding across the ERA, including by publishing information about the programmes and calls on centralised portals (Participant Portal and EURAXESS) and funding programmes judged on a consistent basis (using a number of criteria), which in turn helps to overcome some of the barriers linked to fragmentation of research funding and opportunities. Again, this alignment and coordination is unlikely to have been as efficient and effective in the absence of EU intervention.

**Additional capacity**

According the evidence from consultations with NCPs and hosts themselves the main added value of MCA to hosts revolves around the prestige, reputation and (international) recognition attached to the programme. MCA is strategically important in order to be able to attract high quality researchers. In some countries (e.g. Cyprus and Romania), it appears MCA can also be helpful in terms of halting the brain drain (via reintegration grants for example). Although it would appear that the benefits to the fellows may be greater than those for the host institutions.

Hosts perceive MCA as a relatively straightforward way to bring in high-quality, focused and motivated researchers to add to their teams and to enhance their research and reputation. It also brings welcome additional funding where this can otherwise be scarce. In terms of the benefits it brings to host institutions, MCA is viewed positively by host organisations as a way of increasing activity in terms of training and internationalising research and researchers. The survey evidence indicates that participation helps to build links (the hosts benefit from the researchers’ contacts), augments research capacity and provides much needed income to the host institution. As one host stated, MCA is: "...one of the only ways to attract best researchers (there are few other opportunities with similar levels of attractiveness and rates of pay for fellows)."
Structuring effects

The survey provides evidence on the rationale for COFUND beneficiaries to establish or adapt a programme and the advantages they obtain from participating. This highlights a range of motivating factors, in particular: boosting the reputation of the institution(s); increasing international knowledge exchange and improving the quality of their researchers. There are also some indications of a regional dimension (e.g. South Moravia). Other advantages that found strong support included strengthening EU research networks and increasing the pool of researchers with international experience. The evidence points to a recognition on the part of the COFUND beneficiaries that MCA can offer an attractive route to increasing the internationalisation of their activities.

Several beneficiary organisations mention added value in terms of the creation of international collaboration/ networks; and the prestige and visibility of hosting COFUND fellows. Some of the specific responses include: 'enhance the visibility of the institution at a European and international level'; 'increased visibility of the institute through a structured program rather than Individual Fellowships, however both should exist next to one another'; 'the COFUND Programme has allowed us on the one side to provide a common framework for all postdocs at the host institution and to improve the visibility of the postdoctoral community and organise activities addressing their needs'; 'increase international recruitment, attract the best candidates thanks to the Marie Curie system, improve the image of the [institution]'.

Overall, structuring effects are modest but significant in specific national and regional contexts (for example in Spain, where regional bodies have been instrumental in facilitating COFUND applications), Malta (where consideration is being given to changing legal frameworks to facilitate participation in COFUND) difficulties and Sweden (where a programme aimed at female researchers has been implemented).

Summary: added value

We were asked to consider a number of specific evaluation questions concerning the added value COFUND. These are now addressed.

What is the added value of the COFUND action for the Union? For example:

- does COFUND generate comparable (or higher) benefits for researchers and research organisations to Marie Curie Individual Fellowships?
- what is the impact of COFUND on the fragmentation of funding opportunities in Europe?
- does COFUND succeed to make national and regional funding opportunities more open to international mobility?
- does COFUND contribute to the objectives of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers?
COFUND and MCA fellowships generate comparable benefits for researchers and research organisations. Satisfaction levels are similar and there is no strong evidence that the benefits in terms of enhanced skills, career progressions and employability differ to any material extent.

COFUND beneficiaries recognise that MCA can offer an attractive route to increasing the internationalisation of their activities, most notably through the creation of international collaboration/networks; and the prestige and visibility of hosting COFUND fellows. In some cases existing programmes have been adapted to include transnational mobility whilst in other cases entirely new programmes have been set up for international mobility. COFUND can also be seen to assist in aligning and coordinating regional and national funding across the ERA, which in turn helps to overcome some of the barriers linked to fragmentation of research funding and opportunities. COFUND is starting to have a positive effect on making national and regional funding opportunities more open to international mobility, as evidenced by its strong appeal to organisations seeking to internationalise. However, overall, structuring effects are modest but significant in specific national and regional contexts.

COFUND is contributing to the objectives of the European Charter and Code, to a moderate degree: there is evidence that many participating organisations already had in place appropriate provision; but where in the minority of instances where this was not the case, the encouragement provided has led to positive changes.

In terms addressing fragmentation, although this is an important consideration, for COFUND in particular, the evidence to date is far from conclusive.
8.0 Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

The COFUND mechanism was a novel introduction to the 7th Framework Programme, with the first call for applications launched in 2007. The budget for COFUND during the period considered by this evaluation was around €215 million and that of the Individual Fellowships funded under Activities 2 and 4 was around €658 million. Once beneficiary funding is taken into account (based on an EU contribution of 40%) the total COFUND budget rises to at least €540 million.

Calls for applications for the COFUND were launched under the 2007, 2009 and 2010 work programmes (although the deadlines for the calls were actually in 2008, 2009 and 2010). All calls have been oversubscribed with success rates running at around 60%. In total some 81 programmes have been approved for funding, with the potential to support some 4,731 fellowships over the coming years (or, looked at in another way, some 7,905 fellow-years). The actual number of COFUND fellows who are in post at the current time is significantly less than this, at around 3,200, since programmes take some time to get up and running. During the same time period around 4,405 individual Marie Curie Individual Fellowships were approved for funding under Activity 2 and Activity 4 of the Marie Curie Actions.

The profile of fellows funded under these two modalities are very similar but with some modest differences. The data suggests that COFUND fellows are, typically, slightly younger than their Individual Fellow counterparts (20-39 on average, compared with 30-49 although it is unlikely there are many COFUND fellows at the younger end of this range), slightly more likely to be female (40% versus 36%), more likely to be single (37% versus 32%) and less likely to have children (23% versus 30%).

In the following section we draw some conclusions around the main themes of this evaluation.

8.1.1 Relevance

COFUND and Individual Fellowships have proved relevant to EU political priorities and global objectives, as well as to EU initiatives and programmes in the field of research, by strengthening Europe’s human potential in research and technological development. This supports the strategic agendas set out in the Lisbon Treaty and Europe 2020, while complementarity within FP7 and with key initiatives such as JTIs, the EIT and Structural Funds ensures a sound strategic fit within the overall implementation context of research and innovation. In particular, where such initiatives focus on research, innovation, competitiveness and cohesion, MCA provides support to the continued development of the human capital required to ensure their success. There are similarities between the objectives of MCA fellowships and grant schemes managed by the ERC under the FP7 “Ideas” programme; however the differences are sufficient to avoid any significant degrees of overlap or duplication.

87 The survey responses are presented for the following age groups (20-29; 30-39; 40-49; 50+) and thus do not allow us to break it down further. It is however highly unlikely that the researchers funded are under the age of 25 years, given the requirement to fund experienced researchers.
The relevance of the objectives of both COFUND and Individual Fellowship Actions to the ERA is relatively strong. This applies principally in the area of enhancing the quality and quantity of researchers in Europe, through increasing opportunities for trans-national mobility, enhancing research competences and skills, and supporting career development. For COFUND’s objectives in particular relevance to the ERA extends to mobilising and leveraging national, regional and international resources and widening opportunities for individuals and research organisations. COFUND and Individual Fellowship Actions are also relevant to the ERA goal of overcoming mobility barriers, addressing fragmentation in the European research landscape and in terms of promoting common standards for working conditions as a means to retain and/or attract researchers. The objectives of MCA fellowship activity have strong relevance to enhancing knowledge transfer and strengthening research co-operation, both within Europe and with Third Countries; which are key components of developing the ERA.

Equally, both sets of MCA fellowship objectives have also proved relevant to the needs of research organisations and research funding organisations and to individual researchers. In the case of organisations, they value the access provided to high quality research talent, which helps to augment their own research teams, leads to a strengthening of research outputs and access to international knowledge networks. For the individuals, the benefits lie both in the access the fellowships provide them to high quality research infrastructures and networks, but also the opportunity they provide to develop new skills and experience.

These outcomes link closely to the objectives of MCA: career development of experienced researchers is supported by providing opportunities to acquire and enhance competencies and skills; Third Country researchers are integrated in the EU through access to research opportunities and budgets; and overall the number of mobility possibilities is increased. Opportunities are provided for researchers to acquire training and new knowledge in high-level organisations outside Europe, while mobility and knowledge transfer is supported by attracting high-quality researchers to Europe and strengthening research cooperation between Europe and Third Countries.

One of the successes of COFUND has been its ability to attract a range of European funding organisations to manage COFUND programmes, from international institutions through national and regional bodies to individual institutions. This has provided a strong geographical coverage across the EU, although gaps remain. Potential beneficiaries in some Member States find it more difficult to engage with the COFUND mechanism owing to governance structures and institutional rules and regulations. This has been highlighted in the case of the UK, Norway and Denmark as well as Israel amongst Associate Countries. In contrast, there is strong involvement from beneficiaries in ten Member States, particularly Spain, France and Germany.

COFUND fellows are currently hosted in some 24 countries, particularly Germany, France, the UK, Italy, Spain and Switzerland. The geography of mobility is currently more concentrated, but in principle does not appear to differ substantially from that present in Individual Fellowships. Only a very limited number of institutions have hosted both Individual Fellows and COFUND fellows. This is partly a reflection of the youthfulness of the COFUND mechanism, but also suggests that the two modalities are operating to complement each other.

Overall, the balance of scientific areas supported under COFUND is similar to that of the Individual Fellowships. In practice, a higher proportion of COFUND fellows are involved in Life Science research
and Engineering with fewer fellows engaged in Environmental, Economic and Maths research. The dominance of Life Sciences in both modalities, but especially COFUND, is notable.

One of the questions which this evaluation has considered is whether the COFUND eligibility rule for participating organisations is correctly defined. Overall, we consider it to be so. The emerging trend of leading universities to manage their own COFUND programmes has perhaps been unexpected but there is no evidence that this is acting to the detriment of the programme as a whole. There is also no evidence that opening COFUND to commercial organisations would provide significant benefits and would entail certain risks. Whilst many stakeholders suggest that they could see a number of benefits from opening up the programme to commercial organisation we feel that the costs involved in modifying the programme are likely to outweigh the benefits and that there are alternative means of engaging private sector mobility which should first be considered.

8.1.2 Added value

European Added Value derives from the greater cost-effectiveness and economies of scale of having a single management and administration system instead of 27 separate systems; the ability to offer a much wider range and volume of mobility opportunities, across a range of research fields, than would otherwise be possible; and to achieve visibility at European level (which is more likely to attract researchers from outside Europe for example). A research mobility scheme at EU level is the most appropriate measure to contribute towards the development of the ERA (in the sense of the need to address fragmentation across Europe).

There is no doubt that COFUND is providing an additional benefit to Marie Curie Individual Fellowships. The programme has enhanced the international dimension of a number of national and regionally-based fellowship programmes in ways that are not open to Individual Fellowship actions. It has also reached a slightly different geography. It also appears that COFUND is enabling a new cohort of researchers to access international mobility opportunities which was not possible for them under the existing Marie Curie programmes. In particular it is assisting those with less well-developed personal contact networks and more limited international experience, to access a new set of international opportunities.

However, there is no evidence so far that COFUND is overcoming the fragmentation of funding opportunities in Europe. Indeed, where it is leading to the establishment of new funding programmes it is, arguably, exacerbating this rather than easing it (since a de-centralised approach can promote a degree of operational diversity). There is also no evidence that COFUND programmes generate higher benefits for researchers or research organisations as a whole. Rather, the benefits of Marie Curie Individual Fellowships and COFUND fellowships appear to be broadly equivalent.

There is some evidence that the COFUND is contributing to the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. Whilst many institutions already abide by these, some have made their procedures more explicit as a consequence of COFUND. Equally, in a strong proportion of cases, institutions that were not complying with these provisions have subsequently amended their procedures to do so. This is helping to contribute to a gradual ‘levelling up’ in employment conditions for researchers.
8.1.3 Effectiveness and utility

Overall, Activity 2 of the People Programme is achieving its objectives. We might break the various objectives down in the following manner:

The high-level objective to support transnational mobility (in the context of contributing to the development of the world’s leading research area as part of increasing the EU’s competitiveness), is being met by MCA Activity 2. A key underpinning element in this context relates to the promotion via MCA of greater awareness and responsiveness to the need to provide experienced researchers with attractive terms and conditions.

MCA Activity 2 is supporting the career development of experienced researchers, through providing increased opportunities for mobility, to work with leading research groups and to acquire new or enhanced competences and skills. The research outputs of individual researchers and host organisations are being strengthened and the development of long-term knowledge exchange networks is being facilitated.

As a result, the research capacity of the EU is being strengthened – the quality and quantity of researchers is being increased and researchers from abroad are being attracted to Europe to further augment that potential. European researchers are being encouraged to stay in Europe and the participation of women in Activity 2 is satisfactory.

However, opportunities for inter or multi-sectoral experiences are not being provided, since participation in MCA fellowships remains overwhelmingly within the higher education domain. Mobility opportunities between private and public organisations are rare.

In terms of acquiring and/or enhancing multi-disciplinary skills the research suggests this is not widespread. However it is a complex area, depending on the definition of multi-disciplinarity and the situation will be variable across research fields.

One aspect which requires further consideration is the extent to which COFUND seeks to complement Activity 2 or to engage in support for researchers who would otherwise fall under Activity 1 of the Marie Curie Actions. One objective of COFUND programmes includes enhancing the competencies of researchers shortly after obtaining their doctorate, which is not in line with the emphasis on supporting more experienced researchers present in the rest of Activity 2 and Activity 4.

One area where there is less evidence of effectiveness is in terms of the number of researchers accessing Activity 2 after a career break. The survey returns suggest that only a very small proportion of fellows describe themselves as in this situation. However, there is an important question as to how appropriate international mobility programmes are for those returning to the labour market after a career break. We are not aware of the evidence to suggest that this is a significant issue in the EU and so are unable to assess whether the performance of Activity 2 in this regard is effective or not.

A number of unintended effects have been observed for COFUND, including the relatively high degree of variation and innovation in the implementation of programmes; the use of stipends instead of employment contracts especially in the early years of the programme (albeit a trend which seems to have reversed.
more recently); and the participation of a number of individual universities as COFUND beneficiaries (and hosts).

While all COFUND programmes are meeting the selection criteria and implementation rules set, these have allowed a relatively high degree of freedom. This is not necessarily undesirable – in line with the decentralisation principles that underpin COFUND.

8.1.4 Impact on ERA

COFUND fellowships are contributing both quantitatively and qualitatively to the reinforcement of the human resource potential of the ERA. The quantitative improvements are evident from the number of Fellowships which have been created and filled. The qualitative improvements have been reported on by both Individual Fellows and their host institutions. As we have previously identified this includes the strengthening of research capacities, of research capabilities and of research networks. The benefits can be felt in the host institution for the duration of the Fellowship and in institutions where ex-fellows are subsequently employed. The anecdotal evidence suggests that the positive benefits for a host institution can extend beyond the duration of the Fellowship owing to the positive network effects which are retained. The effects of Individual Fellowships are as strong and, given the profile of fellows, may prove to be slightly more substantial, although it is too early for evidence of this to be apparent at this stage.

Equally, the extent to which the numbers and scope of fellowships and programmes respond to the gaps in the mobility of researchers is difficult to assess with certainty, given the lack of data on the scope of unrealised demand. Clearly the fellowships represent a strong response to filling those gaps, while success rates do not suggest any significant mis-match between supply and demand. However, our research has suggested that demand for COFUND is likely to increase in future.

The geographical distribution of COFUND projects will no doubt have some influence on patterns of mobility, particularly in terms of the geography of incoming researchers. It is rather early to arrive at a definitive statement on this. However, at present the geographical pattern of mobility appears to reflect a wider research geography with no evident biases.

8.1.5 Impact on COFUND beneficiary organisations

Establishing and managing a COFUND programme has affected the administrative and operational procedures of around a third of the organisations concerned, mostly new programmes. Here there have been moderate effects, in particular on increasing the openness of recruitment to trans-national mobility and the use of independent/peer review in selection processes. Moderate improvements have also taken place in the transparency of procedures. Overall it appears that while many beneficiary organisations already had appropriate provision in these areas a minority have been prompted to make changes to bring them into line with best practice.

COFUND beneficiaries are generally aware of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for Recruitment of Researchers and their procedures mostly reflect the principles these set out, although a significant proportion already had compliant procedures.
COFUND also appears to be having an influence on certain strategic aspects of programme administration, particularly with respect to providing a more supportive research environment, providing full employment contracts to researchers and improving recruitment methods and appraisal systems.

A number of aspects were less likely to have changed, including the use of transparent evaluation criteria; assessing research proposals, ensuring portability of pension rights and equal opportunities criteria, the latter probably a result of the widespread appropriateness of pre-existing provision.

8.1.6 Impact on host institutions

Fellowships are predominantly hosted in Higher Education Institutions and, to a much less significant extent, public research organisations. The proportion of COFUND and Individual Fellowships hosted in a private company is insignificant (<2%). On first appearances COFUND seems to be extending the reach of the Marie Curie Fellowships, with a higher proportion of fellows hosted in public research organisations than is the case with Individual Fellows.

COFUND is reported to have had a modest positive impact on the operational and administrative procedures of host institutions. By extrapolation it appears that the effect is greatest in those organisations which have not hosted Marie Curie Fellows in the past. This is to be expected and suggests that the effect of COFUND is acting to further extend the reach of efforts to raise standards across the European Research Area.

All institutions report anticipated positive impacts from the hosting of COFUND and Individual Fellows. There is some evidence to suggest that the quality of fellows coming through Individual Fellowship routes are slightly higher than those coming from the COFUND routes. However, the differences are at the margin.

8.1.7 Impact on MCA fellows

The average time between the application stage and the selection/signature of the contract is longer for Individual Fellows than for COFUND fellows. However, the survey evidence suggests that this does not materially affect the average duration between applying for a fellowship and taking up the position. This may be due to the fact that Individual Fellows are able to make arrangements for their move during the negotiation stage, whilst COFUND fellows can only make arrangements to move when they find that they have been successful in their application.

Contractual and working conditions vary between Individual Fellows and COFUND fellows. The remuneration packages of Individual Fellows tend to be higher than those of COFUND fellows. This appears to be partly due to the greater use of stipends, as opposed to employment contracts, in several COFUND programmes. The use of stipends reflects prevailing practices in the co-funded programmes and is often required owing to national legislation; however, such contracts are less advantageous than full employment contracts. Even allowing for the presence of stipends, remuneration packages for COFUND fellows appears to remain less generous, although to what extent this is due to the slightly younger age profile of COFUND fellows is difficult to disentangle.

In terms of access to training, access to research facilities and management arrangements there do not appear to be significant differences between Individual and COFUND fellows. Overall, levels of
satisfaction of MCA fellows with their working conditions are very high. Individual Fellows tend to be a little more positive here than COFUND fellows but the differences are marginal. All MCA fellows report that they have access to a variety of training opportunities. Access to research-orientated training is positively regarded. MCA fellows, both Individual and COFUND, appear to value training in activities such as intellectual property rights and entrepreneurship to a lesser extent.

Whilst it is rather early to draw conclusions on the extent to which COFUND or Individual Fellowships have contributed to the development of researchers’ careers the anecdotal evidence is certainly positive. Researchers’ generally believe that their Fellowship has had, and is having, a beneficial effect. Drawing parallels with MCA fellows from previous programmes suggests that they are correct in their perspectives.

8.1.8 Efficiency and cost-effectiveness

Overall, the budget allocated to MCA Activities 2 and 4 appears appropriate – the quantity and quality of outputs and results success rates for Individual Fellowships appear to be satisfactory, given the need to achieve a balance between attracting an adequate number of applications and maintaining that element of the programme's reputation for excellence.

Data on unit costs suggests that on average remuneration for Individual Fellowships is slightly higher than for COFUND fellowships – around €80,000 per fellowship year for a typical two-year Individual Fellowship compared with around €70,000 per fellowship year for COFUND (based on total cost where the EU provides a contribution of 40%). On average the employment conditions of Individual Fellows are also slightly better, making working conditions for them generally better. There are a number of reasons for this difference, including the effects of geography (concentration of Individual Fellowships in countries with higher living costs for example); and the relative prevalence of stipends in COFUND, which lowers the average remuneration level.

Funding provided to researchers for living costs is in the form of employment contracts (salaries) or stipends (the latter sometimes accompanied by reimbursement of social costs). There are certain advantages attached to the use of employment contracts, which are linked to the MCA principle of encouraging better working conditions. In practice, stipends are relatively rare within Individual Fellowships and are used in around one third of COFUND fellowships approved in the first three calls (of the stipends used in COFUND around half concern outgoing mobility grants) and a declining trend for stipends is evident for the 2011 Call.

No comparators from other programmes were available to draw upon to make an assessment of the EAC and REA management costs are applied to MCA Activities 2 and 4. In 2009 responsibility for COFUND was transferred to the newly formed REA, adding to the complexity of the tasks in hand. Since then, efficiency has improved and REA currently has an estimated 4.5 FTE staff engaged on COFUND management and administration, responsible for 100 projects by the end of 2012. A new system is being implemented from the end of 2011 to help monitor COFUND fellowships.

The average duration between call deadlines and contract signature for approved project is almost 1.5 years. COFUND organisations and the REA all report that this duration is too long. However, there is agreement that in some cases the very lengthy approach to negotiate a financial flat-rate contribution per implemented fellow-year during the negotiation phase can ease the later implementation of these programmes.
In terms of administrative costs for COFUND programme beneficiaries these can be significant (in particular for new entrants and smaller organisations) and are likely in many cases to extend beyond the provision made within the EU contribution. However, there is wide agreement that the benefits justify the costs.

Administrative costs for hosts (Individual Fellowships and COFUND) are not excessive and there appears to be no great difference between the two modalities. Equally, the majority of researchers and research organisations are satisfied with the funding of research costs.

8.1.9 Sustainability

From the evidence available it appears that the COFUND programmes are unlikely to develop further without EU support at the current time. It will take time for transnational mobility to become a core element of national and regional programmes.

The visibility of COFUND programmes also needs to be enhanced, particularly the fact that fellows are supported by the EU. It is widely acknowledged that there is a low recognition of the COFUND dimension of Marie Curie at present and, in too many cases, this was not clearly apparent to the COFUND fellows themselves. The visibility of Individual Fellowships is much stronger, benefiting from a longer history of consistent brand development. Even here, many regarded the visibility to be stronger in the EU than outside of the EU.

There is also a general agreement that there is a value in developing mechanisms to improve practices. COFUND beneficiary organisations and NCPs all reported that they would welcome seminars and good practice events which aimed to continuously improve the standards of COFUND programmes. This could be of particular value for those organisations considering their first applications.

COFUND and Individual Fellowships

Our research suggests that the COFUND and Individual Fellowship modalities are complementary mechanisms. They attract slightly different populations of researchers with COFUND fellowships offering a route to transnational mobility for those with slightly less transnational experience. In contrast, Individual Fellowships appear to be accessed by those with more experience. COFUND also offers beneficiary organisations the opportunity to structure programmes around local, regional and national needs and research areas. In contrast, Individual Fellowships have a more direct relationship with host institutions and do not have a strong strategic component outside of this.

In practice there are not significant differences in the content of the fellowship offer. Both focus on research institutions (HEIs and Public Research Organisations) and both are strongly organised around developing research-orientated activities. Individual Fellowships tend to have better levels of remuneration, with COFUND programmes making a greater use of stipends.

On balance, COFUND has usefully extended the reach of Marie Curie Actions and is offering positive benefits to the European Research Area. However, it should not be seen as a substitute for Individual Fellowships at this time.
Recommendations

In the light of the evaluation findings and conclusions set out above, we make the following recommendations:

1. COFUND should be maintained – it provides a valuable complement to MCA Individual Fellowships and the range of participants and approaches it supports gives it strength and flexibility. However consideration needs to be given to reinforcing the emphasis on experienced researchers to maintain its distinctiveness from other MCA Activities aimed at other target groups. There remains a need to embed the principle of transnational mobility in national and regional programmes and the continuation of COFUND will make a contribution in that respect. COFUND’s visibility is low and steps to create a brand identity should be considered, which will assist awareness-raising.

2. MCA Individual Fellowships should be maintained and the status of the scheme as a ‘gold standard’ strengthened. The Individual Fellowships have a prestigious profile, ensuring the high quality of applicants and providing support to the perception of the attractiveness of the European research area internationally. The former should be safeguarded by ensuring quality standards are maintained (at about current success rates) and the latter presents an opportunity to raise the programme’s visibility outside Europe.

3. The current internal fragmentation of the Marie Curie Actions should be reduced: the number of individual Actions gives an impression of complexity, although in practice there are many similarities (in target group, procedures, grants and so on). Whereas it is useful for monitoring purposes to maintain separate Actions, for a demand-driven programme such a rigid structure is unnecessary.

4. The objective concerning helping researchers to resume their research career after a break places too strong an emphasis on this issue relative to current practice and it would be preferable to modify this approach to focus more on ensuring applicants in such a position do not face any discrimination and providing encouragement where appropriate.

5. DG EAC and the REA should seek to streamline the negotiations that lead to final approval of COFUND programmes. There is wide agreement that this takes too long and there are two main options for addressing this – firstly by simplifying the procedure (specifically the information requirements – this may entail modification of the rules and regulations); and/or secondly increasing the staff resources applied to the administration of this element of managing COFUND.

6. A watching brief should be kept on who benefits from COFUND. If demand increases (as is likely) one of the largest potential group of beneficiaries are universities and there is a risk that these crowd out other organisations or structures that are more likely to promote synergies between the EU and national/regional levels and bring significant structuring effects to counteract fragmentation. Should such a trend be identified, action might be taken by modifying eligibility rules in annual work programmes (for example making it mandatory for universities to present proposals as a consortium with others).
7. A watchful eye should also be kept on future research fields. Although this is a decentralised matter, there is a possibility that the MCA Panels for example may need to be modified in future if for example life sciences increases its predominance any further or new areas emerge which might require adjustments.

8. Ways should be found to engage commercial bodies in MCA, by encouraging or incentivising them to participate, through learning from other relevant industry-academia cooperation schemes for example. This would help to address the current general lack of multi-sectoral or public-private interaction within the programme, while recognising that the industry dimension is also addressed under MCA Activity 3.

9. Consideration should be given to implementing measures aimed at ensuring lessons from COFUND are learned and shared; via seminars and good practice events for example. Web-based options might also be considered, based around a self-assessment tool. Such measures help to would support continuous improvements in the quality of COFUND programmes and would be particularly useful for new entrants.

10. Consideration should be given to the usefulness of the current labels applied to the different mobility elements of MCA Activity 2 and Activity 4 (IEF, CIG, IOF, IIF and for COFUND Incoming, Outgoing and Re-integration). At present these may have a useful monitoring function for management purposes, but from an outside perspective they may lead to confusion.

11. Our research suggests that at the moment the balance between Individual Fellowships and COFUND is appropriate. Looking ahead to Horizon 2020, if COFUND was expanded this would deliver better cost-effectiveness. However, Individual Fellowships offer higher added value in terms of profile.

12. The results of this evaluation should be disseminated in line with the Plan in Annex 9.
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