



## Circular **E**conomy for the Sustainable Earth **Spheres**- Geosphere, Biosphere, Hydrosphere & Atmosphere

### ECO-SPHERE Post-doctoral Fellowships GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS

#### Call 1 - 2024

Call Launch	April 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2024
Candidate Information Webinar	April, 2024
Application deadline	June 30 <sup>th</sup> , 2024
Candidate Selection Stage	July/September, 2024
Interviews*	October, 2024
Awards*	November/December, 2024
Anticipated employment start*	January 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2025

\*The dates provided are tentative and subject to potential changes or reviews.

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Marie Skłodowska-Curie  
Actions

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## GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS

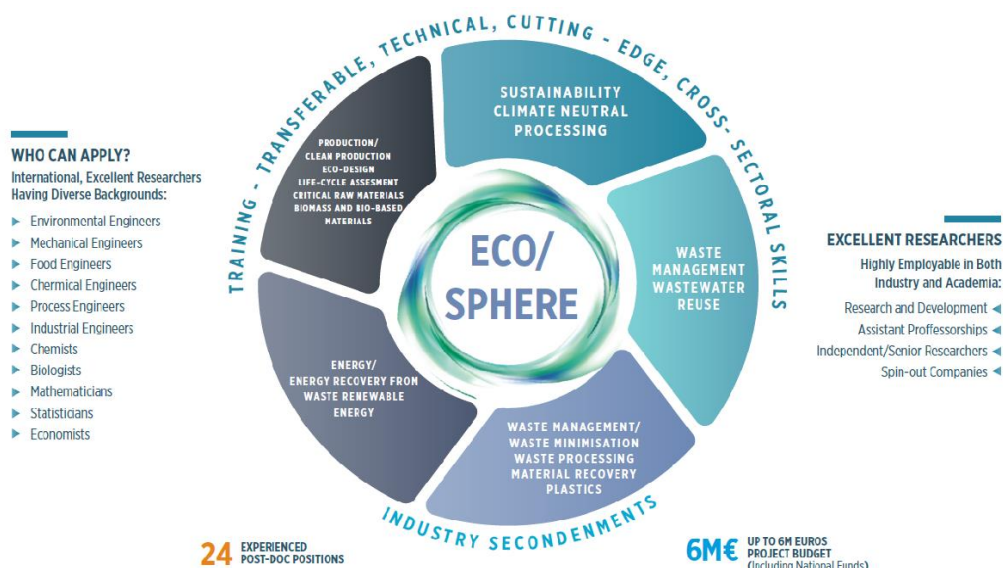
Please carefully review this document before proceeding with your applicant registration.

### 1. Objective

This guide offers guidance and practical details for prospective applicants in preparing and submitting applications for the **ECO-SPHERE** Postdoctoral Fellowship Programme. It also delivers a broad perspective on the program and the evaluation process. Further information is accessible on the **ECO-SPHERE** website (<https://ecosphere-msca.org.tr/>) and in the Terms and Conditions document. Applicants will use the application portal for the submission of their applications (<https://ecosphere-msca.org.tr/portal/>).

### 2. Introduction to ECO-SPHERE

**ECO-SPHERE** is a COFUND postdoctoral programme focusing on **clean and circular economy for sustainable product design and resource efficiency**. ECO-SPHERE will offer 24 postdoctoral fellowships of 24-months length in diligently designated research areas on eco-design, energy, water/wastewater, material recovery, waste management, economic policy, climate change, sustainability, and business models. ECO-SPHERE is coordinated by the Department of Environmental Engineering at the **Yildiz Technical University (YTU, beneficiary)** in collaboration with the Department of Environmental Engineering at the **Dokuz Eylul University (DEU, implementing partner)**. The 5-year programme (2024-2029) will be executed in a broad range of research areas incorporating the EU’s Circular Economy Action Plan with other European and International initiatives such as EU’s Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), Paris Agreement, Glasgow Climate Pact, and COP28. Each 2-year fellowship can have an optional secondment lasting from 3 to 6 months. These researchers will have three phases: an initial phase at YTU or DEU, secondment phase and a final return phase at YTU or DEU.



**Circular Economy for the Sustainable Earth Spheres- Geosphere, Biosphere, Hydrosphere & Atmosphere “ECO-SPHERE”**



ECO-SPHERE will follow the COFUND principle of "individual-driven mobility," allowing applicants the autonomy to select their research project, supervisor, and secondment organization from a diverse range of interdisciplinary research areas. All fellows will be situated in Türkiye at Yildiz Technical University and Dokuz Eylul University. Eligible projects encompass both fundamental and applied research, with a strong encouragement for inter- or multi-disciplinary proposals. Each fellow will be assigned two supervisors from both universities.

## 2.1 ECO-SPHERE and MSCA

Successful candidates selected for an ECO-SPHERE fellowship will conduct their research at these esteemed research universities, providing them with valuable opportunities for professional development and the prestigious recognition associated with being an MSCA fellow.

The MSCA, including the ECO-SPHERE Programme, is designed to equip researchers with the essential skills and international exposure needed for a thriving career, whether in the public or private sector.

### ECO-SPHERE will provide:

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**An innovative research setting to nurture ECO-SPHERE researchers into the scientific leaders of the future.**

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**Fellow-tailored, top-tier scientific training to ensure they acquire the skills necessary to achieve their career aspirations.**

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**Exceptional training in transferable skills.**

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**Tailored training and internships focused on the circular economy industry. This is a unique opportunity for ECO-SPHERE fellows.**

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**A welcoming and nurturing work environment.**

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## 2.2 ECO-SPHERE Indicative Timeline for Calls for Proposals

### ECO-SPHERE CALL I

Call I will open April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024

Deadline for Applications June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024 17:00 CET

Awarded Fellowships will run for two years from January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025 to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2026.

## 2.3 Training & Development Opportunities through ECO-SPHERE

The main objectives of the Training program are to deepen the skills and competencies of researchers, to open career opportunities in academia or in R&D organisations outside academia after the training, to develop new perspectives and approaches through interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral R&D studies and to increase their communication capacity by developing their existing networks. An elaborate training programme will allow researchers to increase their research capacities. As recruiting universities, YTU and DEU already have the entire required technical infrastructure (i.e., central laboratories,



departments' laboratories) and supervisors' experience in academia, private and public sectors, and the use of these opportunities by researchers will provide important experiences to advance the career of the researchers. ECO-SPHERE will focus on the professional development of its fellows, as is standard for all MSCA actions. The program has established support structures in place, including a supervisory committee. At the beginning of the fellowship, ECO-SPHERE fellows will develop a personalised Career Development Plan (CDP) that will include the training programme of each fellow. The Career Plan will be reviewed quarterly to ensure the training needs for the fellow are met.

YTU and DEU have well-established Scienceparks (technology development zones), and various training will be provided on the development of R&D and commercialization culture in the Scienceparks. Some of these trainings are Patent Literacy Training, Basic Industrial Property Training, Commercialization Strategies Training and Entrepreneurship Training. The fellows can discuss this training offer with their supervisors, and that they include courses they will take in their CDP. Moreover, both universities also have lifelong learning centres where both professional and personal development skills training are given, and researchers can attend these training if they wish. Some trainings in those centres are Project Management, R&D Project Development and Management, Ethics & Research Integrity, Grant writing, Academic Article Writing, Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Management, CV Writing & Training for Job interviews, Developing Leadership and Management Skills, Training of Trainers, Public Engagement & Communication Skills, and Open Science Skills.

#### **2.4 Secondment to Industry**

The fellows have the option of completing a secondment during their 2-year fellowship, which can last from **3 to 6 months**. These secondments can enhance the fellows' skills, widen their professional network, and provide new job opportunities after the fellowship. Secondments may take place in the academic and non-academic sectors in any country worldwide. Applicants may include secondment plans in their proposals, but there is also the possibility to set up the secondment, with help of the supervisor, after the researcher's acceptance to the project. More information about potential host organisations for secondment can be found in ECO-SPHERE website, applicants and fellows may also choose another organisation to better fit their career advancement need. The ECO-SPHERE programme will also organise various activities to create opportunities for researchers to share their work with other researchers from **academia and industry**, thereby expanding their networks. The secondment or research visit periods cannot overlap with the final six months of the fellowship. In addition, fellows will be encouraged to stay in touch with their peers at YTU and DEU. The non-academic sector will contribute to the training activities related to the research topics, for example, LCSA (life cycle sustainability assessment), industrial processes, practical applications, etc. They will also contribute to training in non-research-oriented transferable skills, such as project management and entrepreneurship. The non-academic sector will be invited to network-wide events organised by YTU and DEU to increase the interaction among the researchers and industry. Local training at non-academic partners will also be open for the researchers.

This presents an exceptional opportunity for fellows to align their research interests with contemporary real-world challenges. Collaborating closely with industry professionals allows fellows to apply their research in practical settings and expand their professional connections. YTU and DEU boast robust industry connections spanning the ECO-SPHERE research domains.



### 3. About ECO-SPHERE Fellowships

#### 3.1. Duration of the Fellowships

ECO-SPHERE will offer 24 postdoctoral fellowships with a duration of 24 months each. Candidates who will apply to the programme will be able to conduct 24-month research on circular economy at YTU in Istanbul or DEU in Izmir in Türkiye. Researchers may opt to include a secondment phase, within the overall duration of their fellowship in any country worldwide. The secondment phase can be a single period or be divided into shorter mobility periods.

#### 3.2. Eligibility Requirements

##### 3.2.1 Eligibility of Applicants (all criteria must be met).

This programme is designed only for postdoctoral fellows (PFs) and is open to researchers of **any nationality**. Call for proposals, offering opportunities for 12 PFs, will be managed by YTU in Istanbul and DEU in Izmir. Candidates can apply to either institution with a proposal of their choosing and select a supervisor that best fits their individual needs. In addition to a primary Supervisor, a secondary supervisor from an external institution or industry partner may be assigned by the ECOSPHERE Program. It should be noted that researchers who are permanently employed by the hosting organization (as of the call closing date, **June, 30th 2024**) are ineligible for COFUND funding. All applicants must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- **Experience Criteria:** Researchers must meet the requirements of the rules governing MSCA COFUND in Horizon Europe and have a doctoral degree at the deadline of the programme's call they apply to. Researchers who have successfully defended their doctoral thesis but have not yet formally been awarded the doctoral degree will also be considered as postdoctoral researchers and will be considered eligible to apply. Candidates who will apply are expected to have their previous studies compatible with circular economy issues. In accordance with the MSCA PF scheme's eligibility criteria for researchers, **candidates must have a maximum of 8 years full-time equivalent experience in research, measured from the date of award of the doctoral degree**. Years of experience outside research, career breaks, and years of experience in research in third countries will not be included in the above-mentioned maximum. For nationals or long-term residents of EU Member States or Horizon Europe Associated Countries who wish to reintegrate to pursue their research career in EU Member States or Horizon Europe Associated Countries, years of experience in research in third countries will not be considered in the above maximum.
- **Mobility Criteria:** Researchers must fulfil the mobility rules as follows: eligible researchers must not have resided or carried out their primary activity (such as work or studies) in Türkiye for **more than 12 months in the 36 months** immediately preceding **the call deadline (30 June 2024)**.
- **Secondment host criteria:** Applicants must choose a main supervisor from either YTU or DEU. In case of a secondment, the secondment host must be an academic or non-academic organisation active in research. The selection of a suitable co-supervisor, who must be an expert in their research field with relevant supervision experience, will be assessed during the evaluation process.



Please be advised that compulsory national service and/or short stays, such as holidays, **should not be considered** when calculating the mobility timeframes.

### **Equal Opportunities**

ECO-SPHERE guarantees clear and transparent information for all applicants. YTU and DEU have well-organised equal opportunities for all applicants with different backgrounds. Through their **equal opportunities policies**, both universities will not categorise on grounds such as gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, or membership of travelling community, etc. YTU and DEU have all the expected facilities for applicants having disabilities that might be needed during the evaluation and selection stage. If needed, the MSCA Special Needs Allowance will be applied for during the implementation of ECO-SPHERE. Furthermore:

- Steps will be taken to encourage applications from female researchers;
- Conflicts of interest will not be allowed among applicants and referee and expert commissions;
- Candidates will be allocated the necessary additional time for maternity leave, paternity leave, and treatment processes in case of illness;
- The evaluation results will be shared with the candidates in detail per the principle of impartiality.
- The call process will be designed and made so that all necessary information and documents can be accessed equally and easily through ECO-SPHERE's website. However, the applicants must use their login information.

### **Researchers at Risk**

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions (MSCA) enable displaced researchers moving to Europe to continue their careers through the provision of funding and support. As a MSCA programme, ECO-SPHERE also supports researchers at risk. ECO-SPHERE will support applications from researchers who are at risk/who are displaced by conflict, or whose situation makes it difficult for them to pursue their research careers. Support will be provided on a case-by-case basis, both during the application process and during the fellowship programme. All ECO-SPHERE supervisors will support and become a member of the 'science4refugees' initiative, which is accessible to refugees and institutions through the EURAXESS project.

DEU has also carried out the Izmir Ent4Int Center project for entrepreneurs with experiential learning supported by EU/ICMPD-Enhancer. Izmir Ent4Int is a European Union/ICMPD-supported project aimed at promoting entrepreneurship activities. It is co-applied by DEPART and DEU. The project provides training, networking, mentoring, and logistics support to immigrant and local entrepreneurs. The ECO-SPHERE obeys to Europe Horizon ethics policy, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU and the European Convention on Human Rights.

**Please contact the Programme Manager for further information at [info@ecosphere-msca.org.tr](mailto:info@ecosphere-msca.org.tr)**

### **Gender Equality**

One of the main ideas of ECO-SPHERE is to eliminate any inequality and disadvantage to increase Europe's attractiveness as a leading destination for female researchers and innovators in the circular economy field. In addition to addressing gender equality, the program prioritizes diversity and inclusion by ensuring that all participants are respected and



supported regardless of their gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, or any other characteristic. Both YTU and DEU are equal-opportunity employers and encourage applications by women and by members of minorities. The program will achieve gender equality in the global science and engineering environment. YTU and DEU have in place well-set Gender Equality Plans (GEPs). They are compatible with the European Strategy for Gender Equality 2020-2025 and also linked to professional development and policy frameworks for researchers in Türkiye and at the EU level, such as the European Charter and Code for Researchers and the Council Conclusions of 28 May 2021 on 'Deepening the European Research Area: Providing researchers with attractive and sustainable careers and working conditions and making brain circulation a reality'. Both YTU and DEU organisations have officially endorsed the Charter & Code principles. The implementation of the GEPs has been done through sustained communication and discussion with the relevant university bodies such as the Rectorate and the National Higher Education Council Coordination Unit. The coordinator and vice coordinator of ECO-SPHERE are female. All experts and the committees involving the evaluation process will be trained for the unconscious gender bias and diversity awareness with a 5-minute online video document as in MSCA's online training guide for experts. For the training, the ERAC SWG GRI 2019 report 'Tackling gender bias in research evaluation: Recommendations for action' will also be followed. The gender and diversity present in supervision structure will be considered and each candidate will have access to supervisors of both genders. The supervisors will also be trained on the gender and diversity issues from the related departments and research centres of YTU and DEU working on gender issues. During the recruitment process, if there is a draw in the score of two or more candidates, priorities will be set according to Equality Plans of YTU and DEU, for example, the one with less gender percentage will be preferred. The program will ensure equal pay and will provide flexibility in work arrangements and provision of childcare facilities for all participants, thus addressing all gender dimensions of the European Union and providing an inclusive and fair environment for all.

### **3.2.2 Eligibility of Proposals (all criteria must be met).**

**All proposals must adhere to the templates provided on the ECO-SPHERE website.**

Applications submitted in other formats or those that are incomplete will not be accepted.

#### **Application requirements:**

The application must be made through the online portal, and the candidates must first register and create a username and password. There are some compulsory application documents that candidates must provide as part of their application:

- **A motivation letter** (max. 2 pages) that includes an overview of research background and expertise, relevant skills and techniques, reason for applying, and the expected impact on career development. It should briefly mention any relevant career breaks, if applicable.
- A copy of the **Doctoral diploma and transcript of records** (If the original documents are not in English, each document must be accompanied by an official certified translation into English).
- A **CV** in Europass template (max.5 pages) (Any periods of inactivity for medical reasons, maternity/paternity leaves, elderly care, or due to training or professional experience in other fields should also be indicated).
- **Two Letters of References**





- A **research proposal** (max. 10 pages) including objectives, methodology, expected outcomes, exploitation plans in a template to be provided.
- List of **Academic publications** and patents (if any).
- **Softcopy** (in pdf format) of 1 or 2 selected publications within the context of the call.
- A signed **Letter of Support** from proposed academic supervisor
- Ethics Self-Assessment
- Signed **General Data Protection Consent Form**

### General Considerations

- The proposal must be in English.
- Researchers **must** contact their proposed supervisor to seek guidance during the proposal preparation stage.
- All supervisors must align with the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.
- The organizations hosting secondments must engage in activities pertinent to the proposed research and possess the resources and infrastructure necessary to train the researcher and facilitate the research activities.
- Total secondment time allowed: min. 3 months up to 6 months, which can be divided into shorter mobility periods.
- Short visits to international collaborators will be encouraged if they align with the developmental needs of the Fellow or the research project. These visits, such as those for lab work, will be distinguished from "secondments" due to their distinct nature and objectives. The Fellow's supervisor will directly supervise any work conducted during these visits.
- The proposals must adhere to the ethical standards applicable to MSCA. The candidate should identify potential ethical issues and outline how they will be addressed to complete an Ethics Questionnaire.
- Applications must be submitted through the web portal, except in cases where an applicant satisfies the 'Researchers at Risk' criteria.
- The proposal must be received on or before the call deadline (**June 30th, 2024, 17.00 CE**).
- Each applicant is permitted to submit only one application per call. However, unsuccessful applicants are encouraged to resubmit their proposals for subsequent call.
- The proposal must address one or more of the ECO-SPHERE research themes: *Business models, Economic and environmental policy, Water/ wastewater management, Material recovery/waste management, Eco-design, Energy, Climate change, Digitalisation.*

### 3.2.3 Research Ethics Requirements

The ECO-SPHERE program will comply with ethical principles (including the highest standards of research integrity) and applicable international, EU, and Turkish law.

ECO-SPHERE will comply fully with the Horizon Europe ethics policy, including those reflected in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU and the European Convention on Human Rights and its supplementary protocols. The programme will not fund:

- Research activities aiming at human cloning for reproductive purposes,



- Research activity intended to modify the genetics of human beings that could make such changes inheritable,
- Research activities intended to create human embryos for research purposes or for stem cell procurement.

Prior to the start of the fellowships, all projects will require formal ethical approval from the relevant host university's ethics committee.

**“Beneficiary's obligations regarding selected research proposals involving the use of human embryonic stem cells (hESC) or human embryos (hE):**

Notwithstanding the stipulations under Article 14 and Annex V of the Grant Agreement, the beneficiary shall inform the Research Executive Agency (REA) in writing of any research project selected for funding that may involve the use of human embryonic stem cells (hESC) or human embryos (hE). Such research may not start without the approvals of the European ethics review and of the relevant Programme Committee completed by the communication of the explicit approval in writing from the REA to the beneficiary. If the beneficiary breaches any of its obligations regarding selected research proposals involving the use of human embryonic stem cells (hESC) or human embryos (hE), the grant may be reduced (see Article 28 of the Grant Agreement) or terminated (see Article 32 of the Grant Agreement) without prejudice to any of the other measures described in Chapter 5 of the Grant Agreement.”

#### **4. Applying to ECO-SPHERE**

To ensure eligibility and alignment with the research remit, researchers interested in the ECO-SPHERE program should register well in advance of the call deadline. Please submit your project for ECO-SPHERE post-doctoral fellowship programme on the **portal**.

The sections below outline a tentative timeline and the steps involved from preparing proposals to the fellowship start date. For the latest updates to this Guide for Applicants and application information, please refer to the ECO-SPHERE website (<https://ecosphere-msca.org.tr>) and check the FAQ and News sections regularly.



## How can I begin the application process for ECO-SPHERE?

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Check your eligibility

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Register your interest on the ECO-SPHERE website under 'How to Apply' menu.

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Please contact your preferred academic supervisor(s) from our list of ECO-SPHERE

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Start preparing your proposal and CV.

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Obtain Letters of Support from your proposed academic supervisor and university

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Obtain 2 reference letters

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Submit your application on the ECO-SPHERE platform (<https://ecosphere-msca.org.tr>) in advance of the deadline.

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### Publication of Call for Proposals

The first call for ECO-SPHERE will commence on **April 1, 2024**, and will close on **June 30, 2024, at 17:00 CET**. Detailed information about ECO-SPHERE, the participating universities, research opportunities, and application materials and templates will be available on the ECO-SPHERE website (<https://ecosphere-msca.org.tr>).

Applicants are encouraged to reach out to the ECO-SPHERE team throughout the application period for inquiries regarding the program, required documentation, eligibility criteria, or portal platform access.

### The Proposal

After confirming your eligibility and aligning your research, you should commence the preparation of your research proposal. It is your responsibility to reach out to the ECO-SPHERE academic supervisor to discuss your proposal and secure their support for your application. This step is vital, as your fellowship application can only be submitted once you have obtained such support.

**It is imperative to utilize the templates available on the ECO-SPHERE website for your proposal. Proposals that deviate from the specified template will not be considered for funding.**



**ECO-SPHERE strongly advises all applicants to submit their proposals at least 24 hours before the call deadline.**

### **Eligibility Screening**

After the deadline for Call I, the ECO-SPHERE (Program Committee) will conduct an eligibility screening of all received applications. Eligible applications will then be forwarded to the Merit Evaluation Committee (MEC) for evaluation.

The applications that receive the approval of eligibility check will be directed to the MEC by PC. The members of the MECs will be selected from TUBITAK's evaluator pool by the PC. Each MEC will have 3 members selected from the evaluators pool considering the research areas, at least two of them will be international experts. The international experts involved in the selection process shall comprise exclusively those located outside Türkiye. Each MEC will have at least one member from either gender. Where relevant, evaluators from industry will be engaged. The MEC will verify and rate the merits documented by the applicants.

### **Fellows/Researchers' selection**

#### **1st Stage: Eligibility Check**

The eligibility check is done by the PC. During the eligibility check, the applications will be reviewed for their completeness and whether they meet all eligibility requirements presented in the call. Eligible proposals will automatically proceed to the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of the evaluation and selection procedures. Non-eligible applicants will be notified by e-mail no later than 1 month after the application deadline.

#### **2nd Stage: Merit-Based Evaluation**

Each eligible proposal will then be sent by PC to MEC. Members of each MEC as international experts will be selected according to each candidate's project/research area and the experts' expertise. Each application will be reviewed by three external referees for scientific evaluation. Each member of the MEC first allocates a score to each proposal and writes a short statement supporting this score. When all 3 MEC members have done so, they meet virtually to discuss the scores and to agree on a consensus score. The experts score the application in line with the evaluation and scoring criteria specified in the expert guide. The maximum score that can be awarded in this phase is 80 points, calculated as the sum of the scores. The PC collects the scores and final evaluation reports for all applicants. The PC about the progress of their proposal including the score and the final evaluation report will inform all applicants.

#### **3rd Stage: Application Ranking**

At the end of the second stage, the PC will develop a first ranking list, based on the consensus score from the peer review received from the MEC. Applicants whose scores exceed the threshold score (>50/80 points) will be invited to an interview. The PC will invite the candidates for an interview. Two applicants for each available fellowship position per call will be considered.

#### **4th Stage: Interview Stage**

The Interview Committee (IC) will conduct the interviews and score them. The interviews will be via video/web conferencing and held in English. All interviews will be recorded for transparency purposes with the consent of the applicants. The time of the interview will be

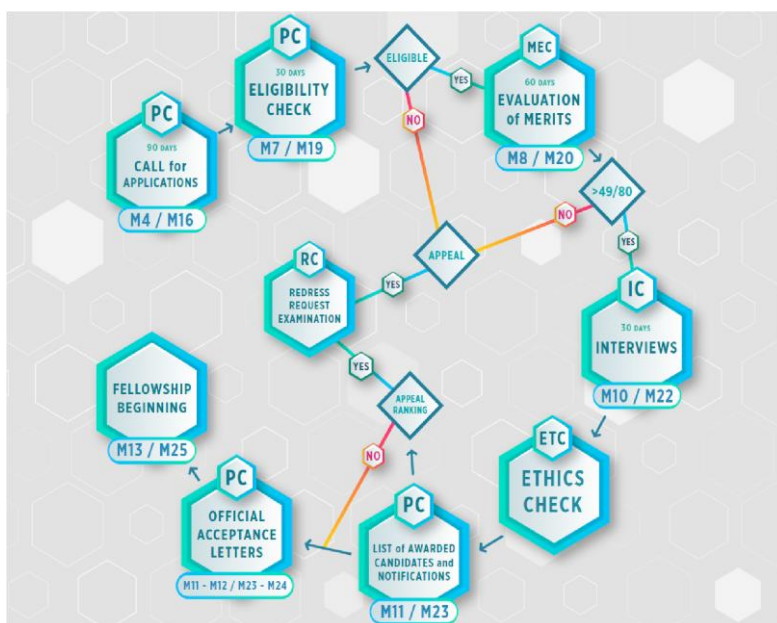


20 minutes: 10' (presentation) + 10' (Q&A). During the interview, the applicants will be asked to explain what they aim to achieve with the research project and their career development plans. The IC members will agree on a score for the interview. A maximum of 20 points will be given during the interview. Each candidate will be asked three questions selected from the question pool prepared by the IC and the questions will be randomly changed for each candidate. The **PM** will also prepare an interview report, including the consensus score from the interview.

**Important: The candidate is responsible for arranging the required web/video conferencing facilities to participate in the remote interview session.**

The selection of fellows will be based on an **open, transparent, merit-based, impartial, and equitable evaluation and selection procedure based on international peer review and interview**. Different criteria will apply for the evaluation and selection of applicants in ECO-SPHERE. These criteria will ensure an objective and consistent selection procedure, in alignment with the **principles & requirements of the Code of Conduct**. There is a **good balance** in the scoring system between education & research (max **40/100**), research proposal (max **40/100**) and interview (max **20/100**). The score does not only rely on bibliometric indices but takes into consideration education and other relevant aspects, skills and competencies (teaching, supervision, teamwork, knowledge transfer, management or scientific-technical implication in research and innovation projects, foreign language skills, computer literacy and social or public awareness activities). During the Interviews, additional aspects that may not be so evident from the CV and proposal (creativity, level of independence, leadership skills, overall potential as researchers, and self-identification of strengths and weaknesses) will be considered. The PM will assemble a final evaluation report and an interview report for each proposal containing the scores and reviewers' comments and additional comments (if any) from the Research Ethics Committee of YTU and DEU in **November 2024**.

The evaluation criteria along with the scoring, thresholds, and priority (in case of ex-aequo) are summarised as follows.



**Fellows' selection workflow from an application process including main committees involved**

**Evaluation criteria for ECO-SPHERE postdoctoral programme**

STEP	CRITERIA	SCORING (over 100)	THRESHOLD	PRIORITY (in case of ex-aequo)
Eligibility Check (Stage 1)	Application submitted before the deadline	<i>In order to pass to Stage 2, applicants must fulfil all these criteria</i>		
	All necessary documents included			
	Mobility and applicant eligibility rules fulfilled			
Evaluation of Merits (external peer review) (Stage 2)	<u>Education</u> : graduate and postgraduate education (Masters, PhD). <u>Research &amp; working experience</u> : participation in projects, publications, attendance to conferences and events, patents, research skills and competences, support letters. Motivation, coherence between the fellowship offered and the potential long-term professional development plan of the applicant <u>Others</u> : mobility (research stays), supervision and mentoring, public awareness, English level, suitability of the profile to the programme, industrial experience	30	20	2
	<u>Research proposal</u> : Excellence (50%: quality and novelty of the research project and their level of innovativeness, soundness of proposed methodology and quality of open science practices, quality of two-way transfer of knowledge between researcher and host / supervisor (or threeway transfer of knowledge with secondment host and supervisor included), Impact (30%: credibility of the project to enhance the fellows' employability and career development, quality of proposed dissemination, exploitation and communication plans, expected project impact), Implementation (20%: quality of proposed workplan, risk assessment).	50	30	3



ECO-SPHERE

<b>Interviews (Stage 4)</b>	<b>Research Skills:</b> Scientific excellence, level of independence, motivation and potential as a future lead researcher, scientific quality of the presentation and answers during the Q&A session.	<b>16</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Communication Skills:</b> English skills & oral communication skills	<b>2</b>		
	<b>Interpersonal Skills:</b> Professional attitude, team player, reliability, motivation etc.	<b>2</b>		

#### **5th Stage: Application Ranking & Ethics Check**

The results from stage 4 will then be sent to the **PC**. The PC in collaboration with an international expert will combine the scores from the interview with the scores of the MEC and prepare a list of fellows with their final scores (in descending order of scores).

All selected fellows (including those promoted from the reserve list) will have their projects screened for ethics before the implementation phase to identify any ethics issues by the Ethics Committee (EC) before the fellowship starts.

#### **6th Stage: Final Decision & Fellowship Offers**

The highest scoring top-12 applicants per call will be offered a fellowship by the rectorates of YTU and/or DEU. The International Relations Offices will prepare **funding decision letters** in YTU, and DEU and the acceptance letters will be received within two weeks. Upon acceptance of the fellowship offers, the hosting organisation will send the **employment contracts** to the successful candidates. Applicants who would like to obtain the terms and conditions in the employment contracts can contact YTU and DEU International Relations Offices. All contracts will be in line with Turkish Law. Applicants who will not be offered a fellowship will be informed. All applicants will receive the score and the interview report. A reserve list of 3 applicants per call will be maintained. Applicants from the reserve list will be offered a fellowship when an applicant from the top-12 declines the fellowship offer. Applicants on the reserve list will be informed of their position. The reserve list will remain in place for 6 months, enabling reserve list candidates from Call 1 to resubmit their proposal for Call 2.

Fellowships awarded in Call 1 will start on **January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025**.

**Redress Procedure:** Applicants who have any objections to the evaluation process may apply the redress procedure within one week after the evaluation results are published. Requests for redress may be made concerning procedural issues including perceived incorrect application of eligibility criteria and not concerning the scientific judgments of the experts. The Redress Committee (RC) will study the redress request. When accepted, the proposal will be evaluated as per above starting from the evaluation stage for which the redress was accepted. Should the redress lead to the proposal being within the funding range for that call, the decision of the RC is binding. The RC will assess any redress procedure that may come up because of the evaluation & selection process. The RC will be composed of two senior researchers from YTU and DEU, MSCA NCP from TUBITAK, and two representatives from the Technology Transfer Offices of YTU and DEU on behalf of the vice-rectors of both universities. The RC will either reject or accept it; in the latter case, a new remote peer review with an ethics check and/or interview will be arranged. Applicants will be informed about the results of redress within 30 days of their request.



## 5. Employment as an ECO-SPHERE Fellow

Upon acceptance of the fellowship offers, the hosting organisation will send the employment contracts to the successful candidates. Applicants who would like to obtain the terms and conditions in the employment contracts can contact YTU and DEU International Relations Offices. All contracts will be in line with Turkish Law.

### 5.1 Visa information for Türkiye

- Researchers require permission to work and/or study in Türkiye. As an ECO-SPHERE fellow, you will be able to benefit from a range of services offered by the EURAXESS office in Türkiye. EURAXESS provides free advice to researchers and their families coming to work/study in Türkiye. Information on a range of issues and areas affecting researchers, including immigration, visas, employment law, healthcare, childcare, social services, and life in Türkiye are available.
- Researchers may contact **EURAXESS** Türkiye for guidance. YTU is one of the contact centers of EUROAXESS (euraxess@ytu.edu.tr). Visas are issued rapidly and traditional work permits are not required. For more details, see the **EURAXESS** website (<https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/information/centres/yildiz-technical-university>).

For visa information: <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/visa-information-for-foreigners.en.mfa>

For work permit: <https://www.euraxess.org.tr/turkey/information-assistance/work-residence-permit>

### 5.2 Financial aspects

The ECO-SPHERE fellows will receive the gross salaries (living and mobility allowance are included) detailed in below. ECO-SPHERE promotes adequate work and employment conditions for the 24 recruited postdoctoral researchers, fulfilling the principles set in the Charter & Code. Living allowance will be paid directly to the fellows in monthly installments, the research costs will be managed by the researcher and the supervisor, while the other categories will be managed by YTU and DEU.

#### Amounts provided to researchers

Cost categories	EU contribution (EUR/person-month)	Total cost = EU contribution + own resources (EUR/person-month)
Living allowance	3,980	3,980
Research costs	-	800
Other costs (training, networking, etc.)	-	150

**Living allowance:** All researchers receive a contract for 2 years. All local regulations such as salaries, social security and social benefits to be provided to the researchers are going to be followed and managed fairly. Considering the monthly salary of researchers who have completed their doctorate in Türkiye, the living allowance contribution is sufficient to provide for a comfortable living in Türkiye. Therefore, family allowance will not be provided by host universities or TUBITAK. **Kindly note that the amount of living allowance is quite sufficient to cover all the expenses of other family members.** Furthermore, it should be emphasized





that the living allowance mentioned here is the gross salary, which means it is subject to applicable taxes and deductions. Mobility allowance is already incorporated into the researchers' living allowance, with approximately 400 €/researcher.month allocated to support mobility expenses. An additional allowance for living expenses during the secondment will not be provided to the researcher, as their salary is sufficient to cover the costs associated with the secondment phase.

**Research & Training costs:** YTU and DEU provide the necessary laboratory, work, office, and equipment space for each researcher to conduct the research. A comprehensive training and career development program will be offered, including supervision and mentoring, networking, and secondment opportunities. The budget for training costs will be allocated for the fellows' training expenses such as national and international conferences, the organisation of project meetings and seminars, to name a few.

**Working conditions, institutional administrative support, and available services/facilities:**

ECO-SPHERE offers the fellows working conditions in line with the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. Both YTU and DEU have applied to the HRS4R award / HR Excellence in Research award and are in the process of obtaining the award. The EURAXESS portal provides all fellows and their family members with practical information and services necessary for their lives in Istanbul and Izmir. The YTU and DEU offer their (future) employees excellent support services. Both universities have non-profit housing offices that act as intermediaries in finding temporary accommodation for international guests. The libraries at both universities serve 24 hours a day. Wi-Fi access is available at every point on the campuses. Furthermore, there are dormitories on both campuses that serve only doctorate students and researchers at affordable prices. Also, there are guesthouses on both campuses where fellows can have short-term stays until finding housing. Furthermore, complimentary transportation is provided within the campus and from the campus to the public transportation hubs. In addition, candidates will be able to easily meet all their nutritional needs from all the restaurants, cafes, student cafeterias, and markets on both campuses. Both universities have medical support units with doctors and nurses, and candidates can easily benefit from these opportunities when necessary. In both universities, there are opportunities to perform sports activities such as tennis and basketball courts, football fields, indoor gym halls, and indoor swimming pools. Both universities also have post offices, banks, and other possibilities on their campuses. The supervisors ensure that the researchers are embedded in their research group with suitable lab and/or office spaces, equipment, facilities, and are carefully supervised. The researchers will fully participate in the training programmes, group meetings, and activities. The institutional admin support will assist with research-related issues, such as IT support from the IT office and support for public engagement activities from the Communications Department.

**Employment conditions, including statutory working practices, social security coverage and social benefits:**

Both YTU and DEU will recruit each fellow for two years under an employment contract with full social security coverage according to the corresponding national regulations. These regulations define the legal basis of the appointment, social security coverage and social benefits, and provisions for leave and vacation. In Türkiye, the standard working week is generally considered to be 40 hours, spread over 5 days. Employees are entitled to 30 days of annual leave, and there are also several national holidays throughout the year. Maternity leave in Türkiye is 14 weeks, and paternity leave is 1 week. The PM oversees that the employment contracts comply with the corresponding conditions set out



by MSCA COFUND Action. All fellows and their families will be covered for social security and be entitled to social benefits under the SGK (National Social Security Institute of Türkiye) scheme by YTU and DEU, under the same conditions as Turkish citizens. Researchers are required to submit documents they receive from their insurance institutions to the social security centres where they reside in Türkiye. Statutory working practices for ECO-SPHERE, researchers will be the same as for other staff from the host organisations working in similar positions. They will also have **access to all the facilities & services at the host institutions**, and they will receive the support of the local administrations to complete the necessary paperwork.

Working conditions proposed for the postdoctoral fellows are entirely in line or exceed national regulations and offer comparable or better working conditions for researchers in a similar position. In addition, fellow employment contracts are in line with MSCA guidelines. Fellows will be provided with the same benefits and opportunities as the other researchers in the lab, including work/lab space and access to equipment and facilities in-house. Other working conditions will be aligned with the national legislation requirements; for example, sick leave or maternity/paternity leave. For the MSCA PF Action, for Türkiye, the CCC is 64.5%, resulting in a regular MSCA PF receiving 3277 Euro for living allowance, in addition to a 600 Euro mobility allowance, thus resulting in minimal variance for ECO-SPHERE fellows. In addition, fellows recruited under ECO-SPHERE will count on the extra support, such as free health care for fellows and their families, special discounts from Central Laboratories of YTU and DEU, from the different Units and Offices involved in the programme. Financial support under this postdoctoral programme is much more generous compared to the most relevant regional and national funding schemes for postdoctoral researchers.



## Important Dates

Application deadline Call 1	<b>30 June 2024 17.00 CET</b>
Peer review	<b>July/September 2024</b>
Interviews*	<b>October 2024</b>
Fellowships Start in YTU and DEU	<b>1 January 2025</b>

\*Please note these dates are indicative and subject to change.



www.ecosphere-msca.org.tr  
Email: info@ecosphere-msca.org.tr

All ECO-SPHERE applications must be submitted through the ECO-SPHERE portal, which can be accessed through the ECO-SPHERE website. To ensure the confidentiality of all submissions, this portal is username and password protected. To obtain a secure username and password to the ECO-SPHERE portal, please register on [www.ecosphere-msca.org.tr](http://www.ecosphere-msca.org.tr).



Marie Skłodowska-Curie  
Actions

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**CHECK LIST: SECTIONS TO BE FILLED ON THE ECO-SPHERE APPLICATION  
PORTAL**

**<https://ecosphere-msca.org.tr/>**

- Administrative Information
- Personal Data Consent Form
- Acceptance Letter from Supervisor
- Proofs for Mobility Requirements
- Diplomas and transcripts
- Motivation Letter
- CV
- List of Publications
- Research Proposal
- Ethics Self-Assessment
- Reference Letters