

MSCA at 30

Research Mobility & Bridging Gaps Across Europe



Location: Skyline by re(space), Rue de Treves 74, Brussels | **Format:** On-site | **Date:** 21st May 2026

“MSCA at 30: Research Mobility & Bridging Gaps Across Europe” is a forward-looking, community-driven anniversary event marking three decades of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions - one of Europe’s flagship instruments for research careers and talent circulation. Bringing together researchers, research managers, institutional leaders and policy actors, the event moves beyond celebratory narratives to focus on the practical realities of mobility, career development and institutional capacity across the European Research Area. Through a fully interactive programme combining keynote reflections, experience-based discussions and structured networking formats, participants engage directly with the challenges and opportunities shaping MSCA today - from talent circulation and return pathways to widening participation and strengthening research ecosystems - with the aim of translating collective experience into concrete recommendations for the future of the programme under Horizon Europe past 2028.

PROGRAMME AT GLANCE

08:45–09:30 | Registration & networking coffee

Wall of opportunities: Interactive networking space

09:30–09:40 | Welcome & opening remarks

The significance of MSCA's 30th anniversary

09:40–10:10 | Keynote address

30 Years of MSCA: What Built Europe's Talent Programme – and What's Next for FP10

10:10–11:00 | Panel discussion

Making MSCA works: career paths, institutions, and cross-border reality

11:00–11:20 | Coffee break

11:20–12:00 | Interactive fishbowl discussion

Talent circulation, capacity building, research bridges: closing gaps with MSCA portfolio

12:00–12:25 | Showcase Session

NAWA-MSCA Network: A practical model for return, reintegration and career support

12:25–13:30 | Lunch break

13:30–14:25 | Moderated table discussions

MSCA Deep Dives: Focused Roundtables

14:35–15:15 | Thematic networking sessions

MSCA Matchmaking Zones – Find Your Partner!

15:15–15:30 | Coffee break

15:30 – 16:15 | Lightning talks

MSCA stories that teach: Practical lessons from the field

16:15-16:45 Reflections & forward look

From Practice to Policy - From Today's Insights to Tomorrow's MSCA

17.00 - 18:30 | Networking reception

FULL PROGRAMME – SESSIONS & SPEAKERS

08:45–09:30 | Registration & networking coffee

Wall of opportunities: Interactive networking space

An interactive, color-coded networking wall designed for researchers, project managers, institutional leaders, research support offices, and innovation actors actively seeking collaboration. Participants can post and browse concrete opportunities: researchers looking for host institutions or secondments; institutions offering postdoctoral positions or MSCA hosting capacity; project managers seeking consortium partners; universities and RPOs presenting strategic priorities; and mentors offering career guidance. The wall will be photographed and shared with participants as a searchable digital catalogue of opportunities, extending the networking impact beyond the conference and supporting concrete follow-up collaborations.

09:30–09:40 | Welcome & opening remarks

The significance of MSCA's 30th anniversary

Tomasz POPRAWKA, PhD & Bogna HRYNISZYN – Polish Academy of Sciences
Gian Maria GRECO, PhD – Chair of the Board, Marie Curie Alumni Association

09:40–10:10 | Keynote address

30 Years of MSCA: What Built Europe's Talent Programme – and What's Next for FP10

Manuel ALEIXO – Member of the Cabinet, Commissioner for Startups, Research and Innovation, European Commission

10:10–11:00 | Panel discussion

Making MSCA works: career paths, institutions, and cross-border reality

Panellists share firsthand MSCA experiences across Europe, focusing on key decisions shaping mobility and career paths. The discussion examines recruitment conditions, supervision, intersectoral mobility, and the role of institutional support mechanisms across countries. By comparing research ecosystems, the panel explores differences in working cultures, funding and career stability, and assesses how MSCA contributes to knowledge transfer and reducing disparities across the ERA. The session aims to extract concise, transferable lessons for both researchers and institutions, concluding with practical recommendations.

Moderator: Tomasz POPRAWKA, PhD – PolSCA PAS Office in Brussels

Rapporteur: Hanna ZAJĄCZKOWSKA - University of Lodz + NAWA-MSCA Network - Central Poland

Panellists:

- **Claire MOREL** – Head of Unit, DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, European Commission
- **Serena GARGIULO, PhD** – Vice Chair of the MCAA Benelux Chapter, Belgium
- **Béla FISER, PhD** – Chair of the MCAA Hungary Chapter, University of Miskolc, Hungary
- **Michael NONES, PhD** – Board Member of the MCAA Poland Chapter, Polish Academy of Sciences, Poland

11:00–11:20 | Coffee break

11:20–12:00 | Interactive fishbowl discussion

Talent circulation, capacity building, research bridges: closing gaps with MSCA portfolio

This interactive fishbowl discussion explores how MSCA instruments can strengthen research capacity across the European Research Area while avoiding one-way brain drain. The conversation focuses on how researchers' mobility, collaborative networks and return pathways can transform individual fellowships into long-term institutional and regional impact. Four initial speakers briefly introduce perspectives from different R&I ecosystems, reflecting on questions such as: why talented researchers leave certain regions, what conditions would encourage their return, and which institutional practices help convert MSCA participation into sustainable capacity building. The format allows participants to actively join the discussion by taking an open seat, bringing new experiences and viewpoints into the conversation.

Moderator: Shaghayegh KESHANIDOKHT, PhD – Board Member of the MCAA Chapter Benelux, Luxembourg

Rapporteur: Béla FISER, PhD – University of Miskolc, Hungary

Speakers:

- **Maria GÓRNA, PhD** – University of Warsaw, Poland
- **Valentina VIGNALI, PhD** – University Medical Centre Utrecht, Netherlands

12:00–12:25 | Showcase Session

NAWA-MSCA Network: A practical model for return, reintegration and career support

A concrete demonstration of Poland's support infrastructure for MSCA researchers: who provides which services, how to access them, and where critical gaps remain. The session maps the complete researcher journey from initial idea through host identification, proposal development, mobility execution, and post-return reintegration, showing exactly which organization handles each step. This is not promotional material but a diagnostic tool. Participants see what support actually exists vs. what researchers still navigate alone, with real cases illustrating both successes and failures in the system.

Ms Bogna HRYNISZYN – Polish Academy of Sciences + NAWA-MSCA Network - Central Poland

12:25–13:30 | Lunch break

13:30–14:25 | Moderated table discussions

MSCA Deep Dives: Focused Roundtables

Participants select one of three themed tables for focused, small-group discussions. Each table is guided by a moderator who structures the conversation around concrete challenges and questions emerging from the morning sessions. A rapporteur captures key insights and practical recommendations. This format allows deeper exploration of specific issues in a setting where everyone contributes - not just listens. Whether you are a researcher planning your next MSCA step, an institution strengthening its MSCA strategy, or a research manager ensuring smooth implementation – you can engage directly with peers facing similar questions.

1. PhD/ Postdoc careers & brain circulation: MSCA as a talent-attracting platform

Exploring how MSCA supports career development, mobility decisions, and return pathways, and how institutions can turn mobility into long-term excellence gains

Moderator: Isabel HERZHOFF – KOWI Office, Brussels

Rapporteur: Andżelika LITWINOWICZ – Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw

Opening speakers:

- **Agnieszka RAZIM, PhD** – Hirsfeld Institute of Immunology and Experimental Therapy of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Poland
- **Rodrigo García VALIENTE, PhD** – Amsterdam University Medical Centre, Netherlands

2. Intersectoral Mobility & Non-Academic Pathways: From Secondments to Sustainable Careers

How can non-academic partners be meaningfully integrated into MSCA projects? This table explores strategies to engage industry and non-academic actors, the benefits and trade-offs of intersectoral mobility, and how transitions between academia and other sectors shape long-term career prospects across different countries and systems.

Moderator: Dunja HOFMANN – KOWI Office, Brussels

Rapporteur: Nanditha K. NARAYANAN – KU Leuven & MCAA Chapter Benelux

Opening speakers:

- **Valentina VIGNALI, PhD** – University Medical Centre Utrecht, Netherlands
- **Ilona URYGA-BUGAJSKA, PhD** – AGH University of Science and Technology

3. Research Management, HR & Institutional Capacity: Enabling MSCA Across Diverse Systems

How do institutional structures, administrative capacity, and HR practices influence MSCA implementation? This table examines differences across countries in support systems, organisational culture, and compliance frameworks — and how institutions can strengthen their capacity to effectively host, manage, and retain MSCA talent.

Moderator: Łukasz PIECZONKA – PoISCA PAS Office in Brussels

Rapporteur: Katarzyna KSIAŻCZYK – Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw

Opening speakers:

- **Fatma DEMIR** – Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium
- **Mia PISTORIUS, PhD** – Ghent University, Belgium

14:25–14:35 | change of rooms

14:35–15:15 | Thematic networking sessions

MSCA Matchmaking Zones – Find Your Partner!

Participants self-select into thematic networking zones aligned with specific MSCA instruments and partnership needs. Each zone is co-facilitated by a researcher and a research management representative to ensure balanced perspectives and effective introductions. This structured networking ensures clarity of purpose: participants know why others are in their zone and can quickly identify relevant contacts, while still allowing organic conversations to develop. Emerging collaboration ideas, partnership interests, and offers are captured to encourage follow-up after the event.

1. PhD & Postdocs marketplace (researchers seeking hosts, institutions offering positions)

Present your profile or opportunity, explore hosting options, and connect directly with potential supervisors, fellows, and institutions. Discussions may include project ideas, expectations, and practical steps toward MSCA applications.

Moderator: Nanditha K. NARAYANAN – KU Leuven & MCAA Chapter Benelux

Opening speakers:

- [tbc]

2. Institutional partnerships (researchers & institutions seeking partners to build consortia)

Find partners for Doctoral Networks, Staff Exchanges, or COFUND programmes. Share institutional strengths, explore collaboration models, and initiate discussions on joint proposals and long-term partnerships.

Moderator: Linda VALKO – NethER Office in Brussels

Opening speakers:

- **Eleni ILKOU, PhD** – Leibniz Information Centre for Science and Technology, Germany
- **Jakub ZAJĄCZKOWSKI, PhD** – University of Warsaw, Poland

3. Implementation Support (connecting researchers with RMAs, EURAXESS advisors)

Get practical guidance on MSCA rules, proposal preparation, and project management. Exchange experiences on administrative challenges, support services, and effective implementation practices across institutions.

Moderator: Beatrix BORZA – MSCA NCP, Hungary

Opening speakers:

- **Fatma DEMIR** – Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium
- **Marilou RAMOS PAMPLONA** – University of Liège, Belgium

15:15–15:30 | Coffee break

15:30 – 16:15 | Lightning talks

MSCA stories that teach: Practical lessons from the field

Four speakers deliver concise, experience-based talks highlighting one practical lesson from their MSCA journey and its broader institutional or systemic impact. Moving beyond individual success stories, the session illustrates how specific MSCA instruments contribute to strengthening the European Research Area — through talent circulation, intersectoral mobility, institutional learning, and capacity building. With particular attention to widening policy contexts, speakers will reflect on how MSCA participation can help reduce structural R&I gaps when embedded in strategic institutional approaches. A Q&A session will draw out transferable lessons for researchers, institutions, and policymakers — including perspectives relevant for FP10.

Session host: Vanessa DEBIAIS-SAINTON - Head of MSCA Department at Research Executive Agency, European Commission

Speakers:

- **Margo BAELE** – Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium
- **Tamas BEKE-SOMFAI, PhD** – Institute of Materials and Environmental Chemistry, HUN-REN TTK & Hungarian Young Academy, Hungary
- **Agnieszka TADRZAK** – Institute of Physical Chemistry, Polish Academy of Sciences, Poland

16:15-16:45 Reflections & forward look

From Practice to Policy - From Today's Insights to Tomorrow's MSCA

The session closes the day with a synthesis of key insights and recommendations emerging from panels, roundtables, and networking discussions. The rapporteur presents a consolidated set of practical takeaways reflecting the perspectives of researchers, institutions, and research managers. Participants vote live on the priorities they consider most important for strengthening MSCA's contribution to the European Research Area and reducing R&I disparities across Europe. The session aims to connect community experience with policy reflection, ensuring the discussion contributes to shaping the future direction of MSCA beyond the conference

A high-level keynote guest will be invited to respond to the day's outcomes, reflects on MSCA's evolving role within ERA, and shares forward-looking perspectives on the programme's development under FP10.

Tomasz POPRAWKA & Bogna HRYNISZYN – Polish Academy of Sciences

Magdalena KULA – Research Attaché, Permanent Representation of Poland to the EU [tbc]

Eszter LAKOS – Member of the European Parliament, ITRE Committee [tbc]

Claire MOREL – Head of Unit, DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, European Commission

17.00 - 18:30 | Networking reception

Turning Dialogue into Connections: MSCA at 30 Reception

