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MSCA Seal of Excellence@Unipd Call 2020

Application Deadline: 07 May 2020

PREAMBULE

Through the investment programme called "Talent in Research", the University of Padua (UNIPD) aims at supporting excellent research to be conducted within its premises. In the framework of such programme, in 2017, UNIPD announced the implementation of the *MSCA Seal of Excellence@Unipd Initiative*, that is intended to attract young researchers carrying out high quality, innovative and ambitious research, with the final goal of strengthening the University ability to gain external competitive funding.

The action "MSCA Seal of Excellence@Unipd" is addressed to researchers of all citizenships, who: have submitted a project under the 2019 Horizon 2020, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions – Individual Fellowship Call for applications (MSCA-IF),

- i) have indicated UNIPD as Beneficiary;
- ii) have been awarded by the European Commission the "Seal of Excellence – MSC Actions"¹, scoring 85% or above but not being funded under the available call budget.

Article 1 – PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

The "MSCA Seal of Excellence@Unipd" aims at supporting up to ten projects, submitted by researchers who have received the "*Seal of Excellence – MSC Actions*" in the 2019 MSCA IF Call for proposals and possess the requirements listed in Article 2 of the present call.

For every year of activity, that is specified in the MSCA-IF project submitted for funding, a financial contribution of 50.000,00 Euros is foreseen:

- 40.000,00 Euros per year (before tax) covering the costs for the researcher's employment contract;
- 10.000,00 Euros per year for research, training and networking activities.

Article 2 PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

¹ The Seal of Excellence is the high-quality label awarded by the European Commission to projects submitted to Horizon 2020, which were deemed to deserve funding but did not receive it due to budget limits (<https://ec.europa.eu/research/soe/index.cfm?pg=what>). All high quality proposals submitted to the 2016 Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) Individual Fellowships which scored 85% or above and pass the quality threshold but cannot be funded under the available call budget, are automatically awarded the Seal of Excellence. The Seal of Excellence recognizes that your project proposal was evaluated as excellent in a highly competitive evaluation process and is recommended for funding by other sources; nevertheless, that the Seal in no way guarantees funding from the country in which the candidate has applied. No assurance is offered that a potential funder will apply the MSCA rates and conditions (https://ec.europa.eu/research/soe/index.cfm?pg=who_msc).

Researchers taking part in the present call must

- ✓ have participated in the 2019 MSCA-IF Call for proposals (European Fellowship or Global Fellowship type), presenting a proposal in collaboration with a Supervisor working at UNIPD and for which UNIPD is indicated as the project Beneficiary;
- ✓ have received the European Commission “Seal of Excellence - MSC Actions” and have therefore scored of 85% or above.

Researchers are not eligible for funding if:

- ✓ they have already received the MSCA Seal of Excellence@Unipd funding, being awarded a grant in any of the previous calls (i.e., 2018, 2019);
- ✓ at the time of the project start, they may not be appointed through a “Research grant contract – type b” / “*Contratto di assegno per lo svolgimento di attività di ricerca di tipo b*” under the provisions of Art. 22 of Law no. 240 dated 30 December 2010 (see Article 5 below).

In case researchers are awarded a MSCA-Individual Fellowship after they have been funded in the framework of the present call, the MSCA Seal of Excellence@Unipd grant shall be suspended.

Article 3 – APPLICATION PROCEDURE

The present call and all documents supporting the application for funding are available at the following pages <https://www.unipd.it/msca-seal-excellence2020> (in Italian), <https://www.unipd.it/en/msca-seal-excellence-2020> (in English).

Each applicant is invited to present an application folder including the following documents², in pdf format:

- a. Application form (Attachment 1);
- b. Copy of personal ID (national ID or valid passport);
- c. Copy of the MSCA-IF project submitted to the European Commission under the 2019 call (Part A and B);
- d. Evaluation Summary Report stating the project score;
- e. Copy of the Seal of Excellence Certificate awarded by the European Commission;
- f. Copy of PhD certificate or other equivalent degree. Italian candidates may prove their degree by presenting a self-certification (Attachment 2). As an alternative, candidates who do not possess a PhD must submit all the necessary documents proving they have at least 4 years of full time equivalent research experience;
- g. Letter of commitment signed by the Head of Department at UNIPD, which the candidate indicated in the project that was assigned the Seal of Excellence (Attachment 3).

Applications for funding shall be exclusively sent by e-mail to international.research@unipd.it by the following deadline

7 May 2020 - 1 p.m. (Italian time zone)

Candidates are invited to specify “SEAL OF EXCELLENCE 2020 – CANDIDATE’S FAMILY NAME” in the subject of the e-mail message to which the application form and supporting documents are attached.

² The application form template and the Letter of Commitment are only available in English.

Incomplete or late applications will not be considered.

Article 4 - SELECTION PROCEDURE

The University of Padua International Research Office is in charge of the selection procedure and, in compliance with the Seal of Excellence – MSC Actions objectives, will acquire the evaluation results deriving from the European Commission.

The International Research Office will first carry out an administrative eligibility check on all applications. Eligible proposals will be ranked based on the scores they have received from the EC and, considering the available budget under this call, the Office will identify the projects eligible for funding based on their ranking.

4.1 - Eligibility Check

At the closure of the call, all proposals shall be checked to ensure they meet the eligibility requirements in accordance with Article 2. Eligibility is checked on the basis of the information the candidate has provided in his/her application folder and verifying that all submitted documents and declarations are correct and complete.

Candidates excluded from the selection process will be informed via e-mail. Should a candidate detect an error in the eligibility check, (s)he can notify it to UNIPD, following the instructions specified in the email message. If a written notification is not sent within 5 working days after the proposal's disqualification is notified, the disqualification become effective.

In any case, applicants will be admitted to the selection process with reserve and UNIPD can disqualify proposals at any point of the selection process, should it find that any admission requirements are missing.

4.2 Selection of fundable projects

The University of Padua will draw up a ranking list of proposals which, based on the score assigned by the European Commission and specified in the Evaluation Summary Report, are eligible for funding.

The financial support to the proposals in such ranking is established in accordance with the available budget. Any case of equal scores between candidates shall be treated according to the procedures applied by the European Commission within the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions³.

The list of eligible projects and the related requested funding will be available on line at <https://www.unipd.it/msca-seal-excellence2020> (in Italian), <https://www.unipd.it/en/msca-seal-excellence-2020> (in English) and via the International Research Office for the purpose of any requests to access the documents.

Art. 5 – ALLOCATION OF FUNDS

The list of funded projects, approved by decree of the Rector granting the funding, will be published online at <https://www.unipd.it/msca-seal-excellence2020> (in Italian), <https://www.unipd.it/en/msca-seal-excellence-2020> (in English).

Once the selection procedures have been completed, the funding assigned to the project is made available by UNIPD to the Department that is indicated in the project proposal. The budget shall include the annual cost

³ For the MSCA-IF 2019, the evaluation criteria applied are specified in the 2018-2020 Work Programme http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/wp/2018-2020/main/h2020-wp1820-msca_en.pdf

covering the research grant awarded to the researcher and the amount covering the research costs.

Applicants who receive funding shall be appointed through a Research Fellow contract ('Assegno di Ricerca Type B'). The contract will be drawn in accordance with Article 3, paragraph 2, clause b) of the current University Regulations for the awarding of research grants⁴, for a total of Euro 40,000.00 (gross amount) per year, for the period indicated in the proposal ("duration of the project").

The hosting Department shall agree the contract starting date with the researcher, under penalty of forfeiture. The date shall not be later than 31 December 2020.

Should the agreement not be entered into by this date, the winner shall forfeit the right to the research grant. An extension to the agreed date may be allowed in exceptional cases, e.g. if a project requires an ethics review, in case of prolonged visa procedures, or in case of justified and documented personal problems. Any request to postpone the project starting date must be addressed to international.research@unipd.it.

The signing of the contract shall not imply a subordinate employment relationship or ensure any rights to access permanent staff positions within Universities.

The research activity begins at the time the contract is signed and is carried out for the expected duration of the proposed project.

The contribution of 10.000 Euros shall cover the costs for research, training and networking activities (e.g. minor equipment, travel costs, consumables, publications and any other costs necessary for the implementation of the project). Expenses occurring outside the project period are not eligible.

Article 6 - DUTIES OF RESEARCHERS OF FUNDED PROJECTS

Researchers selected in the framework of the present call shall personally and fully carry out the activities envisaged in the research project they submitted and for which they are being funded.

In order to verify that the objectives of the funded project have been fulfilled, within 60 days since the end of the project, the researcher shall submit a detailed scientific final report describing how the funding has been used, the implementation of the project, the results obtained (released or forthcoming publications, databases), any changes compared to the original proposal, and a comment on networks and partnerships that may have been initiated during the implementation of the research work. Researchers are expected to report on any seminars and conferences held through their project and on the possibility of further developing their research through other external funding.

The scientific report, together with the approval issued by the Board of the Department hosting the research, shall be sent to UNIPD International Research Office (international.research@unipd.it).

In publications resulting from the research funded under the present call, researchers shall acknowledge the funding programme "MSCA Seal of Excellence@Unipd" and the project acronym.

Article 7 - ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

All the research and innovation activities proposed shall comply with ethical principles and relevant national, EU and international legislation, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the

⁴ The document is available for download on the MSCA Seal of Excellence@Unipd dedicated web pages. Please refer to Article 6 (Admission requirements) and Art. 12 (Conflict of interest) for details on eligibility conditions of grant holders.

European Convention on Human Rights and its Supplementary Protocols.

Particular attention shall be paid to the principle of proportionality, the right to privacy, the right to the protection of personal data, the right to the physical and mental integrity of a person, the right to non-discrimination and the need to ensure high levels of human health protection. Research and innovation activities proposed under these projects shall have an exclusive focus on civil applications.

Article 8 - FINAL PROVISIONS

For anything not specified in the present call, see Law no. 240/2010, the University of Padova current "Regulations Governing Research Grant Awards" and subsequent amendments and integrations, and current regulations.

In accordance with the Italian Presidential Decree DPR 445/2000, at any stage of the procedure, the University shall have the right to verify the applicant's self-certifications and statutory declaration. If the aforementioned statements are found to be false, then the declarer shall forfeit any benefits that (s)he may have gained from the false statements, without prejudice to any sanctions envisaged by the Italian criminal code or by special laws shall be governed by Art. 756 of Italian Presidential Decree DPR no. 445/2000.

The person responsible for the present procedure is Francesca Mura, Head of the International Research Office at the University of Padua.

For questions or information about this call for proposals, please contact: international.research@unipd.it.

This English version of the "MSCA Seal of Excellence @UNIPD" call has the sole purpose of enabling the applicants to understand the content thereof; only the Italian version of the call is legally binding.

Padua, 10 April 2020

The Rector
Rosario Rizzuto

Attachments:

1. Application form
2. Self-certification and Statutory declaration (only for Italian and European candidates who wish to certify the possession of a PhD diploma awarded by an Italian University)
3. Letter of Commitment (to be signed by the Head of the Hosting Department)