



MSCA Seal of Excellence @UNIPD Call 2026

**Deadline for the submission of applications:
31 March 2026 - 1 pm, Italian Time Zone**

PREAMBLE

Through the “Talent in Research” programme, the University of Padua (hereinafter: UNIPD or University) supports excellent research to be carried out at its premises. Within the framework of this programme, in 2017, UNIPD announced the launch of the project entitled “MSCA Seal of Excellence@UNIPD” (SoE@UNIPD). This initiative aims to attract young researchers to undertake innovative, ambitious, and high-level international research projects, with the ultimate goal of strengthening the University's capacity to secure competitive external funding.

By resolution of the Board of Directors rep. no. 28/2026, Prot. no. 40569 of 24/02/2026, the University of Padua has launched the 2026 Call.

The action “MSCA Seal of Excellence@UNIPD” is addressed to researchers of all nationalities, who:

- have submitted a project under the **Horizon Europe 2025 Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions – Postdoctoral Fellowship Call for proposals (MSCA-PF)**;
- have indicated UNIPD as Beneficiary;
- have been awarded by the European Commission the “Seal of Excellence – MSC Actions”¹, scoring 85 out of 100, or above, but not being funded under the call due to budget restraints.

The eligibility requirements of candidates admitted to funding will be verified at the start of the project, in accordance with the relevant regulations that will be eventually applicable.

Article 1 - OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAMME

The “MSCA Seal of Excellence@UNIPD” aims at supporting projects submitted by researchers who have received the “*Seal of Excellence – MSC Actions*” in the **Horizon Europe 2025 MSCA-PF call for proposals** and possess the eligibility requirements listed in the following Article 2.

Each funded project will be awarded a grant for its entire duration (including any potential *placement* months and up to a maximum of 36 months), consisting of the following:

1. 55.694,16 Euros per year including the researcher's salary (gross employee), the University's contributions and IRAP (Regional Tax on Production Activities), with a possible integration as foreseen in point 3, as follows;
2. 10.000 Euros per year for research, training and networking activities;

¹ The Seal of Excellence is a quality label awarded by the European Commission to project proposals submitted under the Horizon Europe program which, having undergone a positive evaluation and exceeded the quality threshold for funding, could not be funded due to available budget limits. (https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/funding/funding-opportunities/seal-excellence_en)

3. For MSCA PF Global Fellowship projects, in line with the European standards adopted under the 2023-24-25² (Work Programme) for the mandatory secondment period (outgoing phase) only, a mobility allowance is granted, established as follows:
- 500 Euros/month for a maximum of 24 months - corresponding to an annual supplement of 6,000 Euros on the base salary of 55.694,16 Euros (all amounts are to be understood as "gross institutional cost"), for projects involving an outgoing phase in countries with a correction coefficient of 115 or less;
 - For researchers going to countries whose European correction coefficient is higher than 115, the amount of the contract referred to in point 1 will be proportionally adjusted based on the coefficient of the host country for the outgoing phase, to cover the secondment period and for a maximum of 24 months³.

The University will award a Postdoctoral Fellowship to the selected candidates for the aforementioned amount, in accordance with Article 32, paragraph 3, of the University Regulations for the assignment of research contracts and post-doctoral research positions (Articles 22 and 22bis of Law 240/2010), hereinafter referred to as the 'University Regulations', available at the link https://www.unipd.it/sites/unipd.it/files/2025/REG_Contratti-ricerca-incarichi-post-doc2025.pdf.

Article 2 – INDIVIDUAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Researchers taking part in this call are considered eligible for funding if they possess the following requirements at the date of application:

- ✓ they have participated in the 2025 MSCA-PF 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;
- ✓ they have received the European Commission "Seal of Excellence - MSC Actions" and have scored 85 out of 100 or above.

Researchers who have already benefited from MSCA Seal of Excellence@UNIPD funding in any of the previous SoE@UNIPD calls for applications are ineligible to apply.

On penalty of exclusion from the ranking list and the subsequent inability to award the position, candidates' eligibility requirements will be verified at the start of the project, in accordance with the relevant regulations of the institution to be applied.

In any case, candidates are admitted to the selection procedure with reserve. The University of Padua reserves the right to exclude them at any time should it be found that one or more eligibility requirements are not met.

² Ref. p. 141 of the MSCA-PF Work Programme 2023-25, Table 1: Country correction coefficients (CCC) for Doctoral Networks and Postdoctoral Fellowships living allowances https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2023-2024/wp-2-msca-actions_horizon-2023-2024_en.pdf.

³ By way of example (all amounts listed below are gross institutional costs):

For a three-year GF project involving two years spent in the United States (for which the 2024 Work Programme indicates a correction coefficient higher than 115, specifically 169.4) and a third year at the University, the contract amount for the SoE@Unipd 2026 call winner will total €244,385.97 (Years 1 and 2, or outgoing phase: €55,694.16 x 169.4% = €94,345.91 → x 2 = €188,691.81; Year 3, or return phase: €55,694.16; total: €244,385.97).

Conversely, for a three-year GF project involving two years spent in a Third Country with a correction coefficient less than or equal to 115, the post-doc contract amount for the SoE@Unipd 2026 call winner will total €179,082.48 (Years 1 and 2, or outgoing phase: €55,694.16 + €6,000 = €61,694.16 → x 2 = €123,388.32; Year 3, or return phase: €55,694.16; total: €179,082.48).

Article 3 - APPLICATION PROCEDURE

This call and all documents supporting the application for funding are available at the following pages <https://www.unipd.it/msca-seal-excellence-2026> (in Italian) and <https://www.unipd.it/en/msca-seal-excellence-2026> (in English).

Each applicant is invited to submit an online application via [Google Form](#). The application must be duly completed with all relevant requested information, including the following documents⁴, in pdf format:

1. Copy of valid ID (national ID or passport);
2. Copy of PhD certificate or other equivalent degree. Italian candidates may attest their degree by presenting a self-certification as a “Statutory declaration” (*Dichiarazione sostitutiva* - Annex 1);
3. Letter of commitment of the Researcher (Annex 2);
4. Letter of Commitment signed by the Head of the Host Department at UNIPD. The Host Department must be the same as indicated by the candidate in the MSCA-PF project that was assigned the MSCA Seal of Excellence (Annex 3);
5. Copy of the MSCA-PF project submitted to the European Commission under the 2024 call (Part A, B1 and B2);
6. Evaluation Summary Report stating the MSCA-PF project score;
7. A copy of the Seal of Excellence Certificate, if already issued by the European Commission at the time of application. Please note that submitting the Seal of Excellence Certificate to UNIPD is a mandatory condition for the awarding of the funding; as soon as it becomes available, it must be sent via email to individual.grants@unipd.it

The submission of funding applications, which must be presented exclusively via the dedicated Google Form including all the aforementioned attachments, must be completed no later than

31 March 2026, 1 pm, Italian Time Zone

Incomplete or overdue applications will not be taken into consideration.

Article 4 - SELECTION PROCEDURE

The selection procedure for the proposals to be funded is managed by the International Research Office of the University of Padua. This office carries out an administrative eligibility check on all funding applications, followed by the drafting of a ranking list and the identification of the projects eligible for funding, based on the available budget. Any discrepancies regarding the formal eligibility requirements established by the Horizon Europe 2025 Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions – Postdoctoral Fellowships (MSCA-PF) call will be subject to evaluation.

4.1 Eligibility Check

⁴ The templates for the letters of commitment (Letter of Commitment – Researcher and Letter of Commitment – Host Institution) are available exclusively in English.

At the closure of the call, all proposals are subject to the administrative eligibility check in accordance with the requirements listed in Article 2. The applications are assessed to verify the correctness and completeness of the information provided by the candidates.

Ineligible candidates will receive an email including the reasons for the rejection and a reference to the redress procedure. From the receipt of the exclusion notice, candidates have 5 working days to report any errors found in the eligibility check carried out by UNIPD to the International Research Office (individual.grants@unipd.it) by email. After this period, the exclusion becomes final.

Under all circumstances, candidates shall be considered as admitted to the selection process with reserve, and Unipd reserves the right to exclude them at any stage should it be determined that one or more participation requirements are not met.

4.2 Selection of fundable projects

The University of Padua shall proceed with the drafting of a ranking list of the proposals eligible for funding and a reserve list. The International Research Office will acquire the project evaluations already carried out by the European Commission and will take into account the difference between the funding threshold recorded in the specific MSCA panel of reference and the score obtained by the candidate, ranking the candidates in ascending order of their distance from the threshold. Should the funding threshold data for each individual panel be unavailable at the time the ranking is drafted, the International Research Office will rank the proposals in descending order of score, using the nominal score reported in the Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) issued by the European Commission.

Eligible proposals will be funded until the available budget limit for this call is reached. In the event that additional funds are released, it will be possible to progressively fund the projects ranked in the reserve list and until the available budget is exhausted.

Any *ex-aequo* will be treated following the procedures applied by the European Commission within the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions⁵.

The list of eligible and fundable projects, with the related requested funding amount, will be made available online at <https://www.unipd.it/msca-seal-excellence-2026> (in Italian) e <https://www.unipd.it/en/msca-seal-excellence-2026> (in English) and at the International Research Office for the purpose of any requests of access to records.

Article 5 - ALLOCATION OF FUNDS

The list of funded projects and the reserve list, approved by Rector's decree granting the funding, will be published online at <https://www.unipd.it/msca-seal-excellence-2026> (in Italian) and <https://www.unipd.it/en/msca-seal-excellence-2026> (in English).

⁵ In the MSCA-PF-2025 Call, the criteria applied are specified in the 2023-2025 Work Programme https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2023-2024/wp-2-msca-actions_horizon-2023-2024_en.pdf.

Upon completion of the selection procedures, UNIPD shall provide the Department chosen as the research host institution with the funding awarded to the project. This includes the annual allowance for the researcher's contract and the allowance for research expenses.

It is the responsibility of the University's Administrative Board to approve, upon proposal by the Department, the assignment of the post-doc position to be charged to the research project, in compliance with the spending limit provided for in Article 39, paragraph 2, of the University Regulations.

Following the University's Administrative Board approval, the University will enter into a contract with the grant recipients for an annual amount of 55.694,16 Euros per year including the researcher's salary (gross employee), the University's contributions and IRAP (Regional Tax on Production Activities). This may be supplemented by a mobility allowance, limited to the outgoing phase to be carried out in a Third Country for a maximum of 24 months, exclusively for MSCA PF Global Fellowship projects (as per the criteria specified in Article. 1, point 3). The duration of the contract, equal to that of the proposal that received the MSCA Seal of Excellence including the placement period, if applicable, cannot exceed 36 months. Research activities shall commence upon the signing of the contract and continue for the duration of the project. The contribution to cover research, training, and networking costs (for example: small equipment, travel, consumables, publications, etc.) necessary for the implementation of the project amounts to 10,000 euros per year. Expenses incurred outside the project period are not eligible.

The Department hosting the research shall agree with the researcher on the deadline by which the contract must be signed, on penalty of forfeiture. This date cannot be later than **31 December 2026**.

Failure to sign the contract within the aforementioned deadline results in the forfeiture of the right to funding. An extension of the deadline for signing the contract may be granted in exceptional cases, such as prolonged visa procedures delaying the start of activities, justified and documented personal reasons, or for projects that have not yet obtained ethical approval. Requests to postpone the project start date beyond 31 December 2026 must be addressed to the International Research Office (individual.grants@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 Seal of Excellence @UNIPD funding is revoked for those who:

- as of the project start date, they do not meet the legal requirements for the awarding of a Postdoctoral Fellowship;
- they are awarded an MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowship or enter into another contract that is incompatible with the position established by this call for applications.

Article 6 - DUTIES OF RESEARCHERS OF FUNDED PROJECTS

The researchers funded under this call shall carry out the activities envisaged in the research project fully and personally. The research activities must comply with the MSCA-PF 2025 project that obtained the Seal of Excellence, as submitted in the application.

In order to verify the achievement of the funding objectives, at the end of each year of activity, the post-doc fellow must submit the following to the Head of the host Department:

- an annual financial report containing an account of the use of the funding allocated to research;
- an annual scientific report illustrating the activities carried out within the project and the results achieved.

A negative evaluation of the activities performed by the post-doc fellow shall constitute grounds for the termination of the contract by the University, pursuant to Art. 38, paragraph 4, the University Regulations.

Furthermore, within 60 days of the end of the project, each researcher must submit the following final reports:

- a financial report containing an account of the use of the funding allocated to research;
- a scientific report illustrating the project's implementation methods, the results obtained, and any variations from the initial proposal, a list of research outputs (publications produced or in press, databases), and an account of the networks established during the research, the organization of seminars and conferences, the potential for further development of the research, and its continuation through other external funding.

These reports, accompanied by the opinion of the Board of the host Department, must be sent to the UNIPD International Research Office (individual.grants@unipd.it).

In any publications resulting from the research activities funded under this call, researchers must acknowledge the funding received by citing the program name "MSCA Seal of Excellence @ UNIPD" and the project acronym.

Article 7 - ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

All 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 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 this call for applications, reference is made to the provisions of Law no. 240/2010 as subsequently amended and supplemented, and its relative implementing regulations, including internal University regulations and, in any case, to the current legislation on the matter.

UNIPD reserves the right to verify the veracity of the self-certifications and statutory declarations provided by the candidates pursuant to Presidential Decree (D.P.R.) no. 445/2000, at any stage of the procedure. Should the aforementioned check reveal that the content of the declarations is untrue, the declarants shall forfeit any benefits resulting from the measure issued based on the untruthful declaration, without prejudice to the provisions of Art. 76 of Presidential Decree no. 445/2000 regarding the sanctions provided for by the criminal code and special laws on the matter.

The person in charge of the administrative procedure (Responsabile del Procedimento) is Andrea Berti, Head of the Research and Business Relations Area of the University of Padua.

For clarifications or information regarding this call for applications, please write to individual.grants@unipd.it

This English version of the “MSCA Seal of Excellence @UNIPD” call is a courtesy translation and it has the sole purpose of enabling applicants to understand the content thereof; only the Italian version of the call is legally binding.

Padua, Date of registration

The Rector
Daniela Mapelli

digitally signed according to legislative decree no. 82/2005

Allegati:

1. Statutory declaration (only for Italian and European candidates who wish to certify the possession of a PhD diploma awarded by an Italian University)
2. Letter of Commitment of the Researcher (mandatory)
3. Letter of Commitment of the Hosting Department, to be signed by the Head of the Hosting Department at UNIPD (mandatory)