

Promotion plan 1

MSCA promotion landscape

Key promotion players and potential: Australia



This promotion plan (as of February 2023) includes country- and region-specific information, as well as a description of MSCA promotion actors, the type of activities they implement, and an overview of facts and figures regarding participation in the European Union's Horizon2020 (2014–2020) and Horizon Europe (2021–2027) Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation. Gaps and challenges in promoting MSCA are identified.

The information provided is based on desk research carried out by the responsible country liaison officers, as well as on information obtained through direct contacts with key stakeholders such as MSCA National Contact Points, ministry officials in charge of research and innovation, international offices at universities or information relays (EURAXESS Worldwide, MSCA Alumni, etc.) and desk officers at the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sports and Culture.

An update of this promotion plan as well as more information on Australia and 19 other countries and 6 other regions are also available on the MSCAdvocacy website.

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MSCA Promotion Plan – Australia

Country-specific information

The first treaty-level science and technology agreement signed by the European Union (EU) with an industrialised country was with Australia in 1994. The framework guiding Australia's international industry, innovation and science collaboration is the Global Innovation Strategy (GIS). The EU and EU Member States (MS) are priority economies for cooperation. All EU-MS are eligible to apply with an Australian partner for the GIS Global Innovation Linkages programme and the Global Connections Fund. In 1999, the Amendment of the Agreement on scientific and technical cooperation between the European Union and Australia was signed. The amendment made explicit reference to the stimulation of the training and mobility of researchers in the Community¹.

The main fields of bilateral research collaboration have been: health, research infrastructures, information and communication technologies; food, agriculture and biotechnology. There is some collaboration in areas such as energy, the environment, social sciences and humanities. At the 15th Australia-EU Joint Science and Technology Cooperation Committee meeting in 2019 in Canberra, both sides noted the excellent rates of existing Australia-EU collaboration, due in part to opportunities offered by Horizon 2020 (H2020) and in particular through its Marie-Sklodowska Curie Actions (MSCA) scheme.² Both sides discussed areas for ongoing and potential future collaboration, including research infrastructure, earth observation, hydrogen, open science, mission innovation and opportunities to cooperate across the Pacific.

MSCA promotion actors in Australia

For Australia, one National Contact Point (NCP) is responsible for MSCA. Sarah Brown at the Australian Embassy and Permanent Mission to the European Union in Brussels is mandated by the Australian Government. Ms Brown has the following functions: NCP Coordinator, NCP Legal and Financial aspects, NCP European Research Council (ERC), NCP MSCA, NCP Research Infrastructures, Health. Currently, the major player in promoting MSCA is EURAXESS worldwide Australia/New Zealand.

Promotion of MSCA in Australia

In 2022, the following actions took place: EURAXESS Worldwide Australia/New Zealand organised three physical three-day missions to universities in Western Australia, Queensland and to Victoria providing information on HEU (incl. MSCA). The audience participating included PhD students, early and mid-career researchers and senior researchers. Four Australian universities invited EURAXESS Australia and New Zealand Regional Coordinator, Mr Nishant Shandilya, to provide information primarily on EU Framework Programmes (H2020 and HEU), European Research Council (ERC) grants and Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions (MSCA) during hybrid/online sessions. Furthermore, two virtual meetings dedicated to MSCA dealing how to write a successful application were offered by EURAXESS.

¹ Article 164 ex Article 130g(d) of the EC Treaty: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/treaty/tec_1997/art_164/oj [15.02.2023]

² The next joint meeting is planned for 2023.



EURAXESS is the one-stop shop for MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships (PF) for the region. They organise an introductory webinar for MSCA PF when a new call opens. This is followed up by a detailed webinar on application advice. EURAXESS organises this webinar with experts from the MSCA Unit as well as NCP from Member States. These webinars are very well attended. The session on May 5 and June 2 in 2022 saw interest from more than 400 people. The webinar recording attracts quite a lot of traffic.³ With regards to MSCA Doctoral Networks (DN) and COFUND, as Australian institutions are not eligible to receive EU funding, EURAXESS focuses on the vacancies that come out of DN and COFUND. These PhD and Postdoc vacancies are open for researchers of any nationality and hence are useful to promote. EURAXESS publishes these opportunities almost every weekday and disseminate them through social media channels (LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook). These seem very well received as evident from the likes.

Participation of Australia – Facts and figures

Australia participated in a total of 184 MSCA projects within H2020 (2014–2020), with a total of 40 distinct organisations. The most popular action within MSCA was, in the case of Australia, the Research and Innovation Staff Exchange (RISE), Innovative Training Networks (ITN) and COFUND⁴. Australia accounted for 0.42% of all MSCA participations under H2020⁵ (IF is not considered here).

With about 95%, nearly all participating organisations in MSCA from Australia come from the academic sector. The non-academic sector occurs for the remaining 5%⁶. With 4.67% of nonacademic organisations and a share of 2.80% of private for-profit organisations, Australia is below the average for Other Countries which get Exceptional Funding (OCEF). Among the six top Australian private for-profit entities participation only one enterprise is listed (BRESMEDICAL PTY LTD). No small and medium sized enterprise (SME) from Australia took part in the MSCA programme in H2020.

The success rate of Australia's applicants is 19.67%. The OCEF average is at 20.14%. This success rate is slightly below average⁷. In the case of Australia, there is a notable imbalance in terms of researcher's flow. The number of researchers incoming to Australia (525) is more than twice as high as the number of researchers of Australian nationality coming to EU/AC (242)⁸.

During H2020, 30% of the country's top research excellence organisations were not yet involved in MSCA at all. Based on the number of annual participations as well as the organisations participations, Australian organisations with high potential for future involvement in MSCA are: Melanoma Institute Australia, Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research, Queensland Institute of Medical Research, Garvan Institute of Medical Research, Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre and Australian Research Council.

The main fields of Australian-EU research collaboration through MSCA have been at 40% the natural sciences, standing out significantly. Participation in engineering and technology (19%) and medical and health sciences (11%) is much weaker, despite Australia's strengths in these areas. Participation is rather low in the fields of social sciences (15%), humanities (6%) and agricultural science (8%). Since Australia is particularly strong in engineering and technology, in medical and health sciences as well

³ <https://youtu.be/lZfN2YlFfNw> [15.02.2023] <https://youtu.be/picp5dsmNU4> [15.02.2023]

⁴ MSCA Dashboard, data status 2023

⁵ <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/dashboard/extensions/CountryProfile/CountryProfile.html?Country=Australia>, [31.01.2023]

⁶ MSCA country profile Australia

⁷ Country factsheet Australia EU-Commission

⁸ MSCA Dashboard, data status 2023



as in agriculture, and these are also common thematic priorities, these research areas should be increasingly addressed by MSCA promotion activities.

Due to the Covid pandemic and resulting strict travel restrictions in Australia, it is obvious that the number of projects as researchers' flow decreased significantly comparing the years 2014–2015 and 2019–2020, with a decline of 24% of contracted projects and 75% of the researchers flow⁹.

Under Horizon Europe (HEU), which has started in 2021, 46 projects in total were contracted in the first two years (2021 & 2022). Most projects (11) were contracted under MSCA-PF in 2021 and under MSCA-COFUND (16) in 2022¹⁰.

Unfortunately, no precise figures are available on the exact participation of Australia in COST Actions via Internet searches. The COST Report does not contain any information on the participation of Australian institutions. In addition, the search function with the term 'Australia' also displays projects in which the country was not involved at all. However, scientists and institutions participating in COST Actions are a potential target audience for MSCA. At least one organisation that we have identified with high potential for future MSCA involvement took part in one COST Action: Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre¹¹.

Australia took part in 303 COST Actions.¹² A total of five Australian organisations were involved in the Jean Monnet Actions. These could be a possible target group for MSCA.¹³ Of the third countries comparatively considered in MSCAdvocacy¹⁴, only the USA is ahead of Australia with eight projects.

Gaps and challenges

During our analysis, we have seen the following gaps and challenges in Australia for the promotion of MSCA:

- Mainly promotion of MSCA by EURAXESS Australia and New Zealand. These promotion activities are done additionally to other duties and there is only one EURAXESS office responsible for two countries.
- The Australian NCP is based in Brussels. The time difference and long distance makes it harder for Australian institutions and individuals to make contact. Due to many other tasks to take care of there is little time to deal with MSCA, its promotion or guidance of applicants.
- No regular meetings/exchange platform exist to bring together target groups from science and industry as well as further multipliers.
- No MSCA Alumni Chapter exists in Australia. Currently there is no platform for interested Australian researchers or institutions that want to apply in MSCA to get in touch with Alumni that can offer best practices/success stories and/or advice.

⁹ MSCA Dashboard, data status 2023

¹⁰ MSCA Dashboard, data status 2023

¹¹ <https://www.cost.eu/actions/CM1201/#tabs+Name:Parties> [15.02.2023]

¹² https://www.cost.eu/search/Australia?post_type=&orderby=relevance&order=DESC [15.02.2023]

¹³ <https://op.europa.eu/o/opportal-service/download-handler?identifier=757368ca-7b6e-11ed-9887-01aa75ed71a1&format=pdf&language=en&productionSystem=cellar&part> [15.02.2023]

¹⁴ In the group of industrialised countries are considered: Australia, Canada, Japan, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Switzerland, United States



Suggested MSCA promotion actions

This chapter summarises potential promotion actions to address gaps or emerging opportunities in Australia, so that the EC and/or the Joint Committees can select those they consider most useful. Each potential promotion activity has been given a unique identifier, which the EC can use to request the project to implement or to support implementation by other stakeholders in Australia.

The implementation of a given promotional activity will then be carried out or coordinated by the MSCAdvocacy beneficiary responsible for Australia, in close cooperation with the respective desk officer in DG EAC, the national MSCA NCP (if appointed) and other relevant stakeholders, preparing a concept and timeline to be agreed upon.

Given the fact that NCPs regularly mentioned a lack of data on MSCA in their country, one of the main support activities of MSCAdvocacy could be the provision of relevant data, suitably processed for collaborating stakeholders.

AUS-01

Promotion of MSCA is mainly performed by EURAXESS Australia and New Zealand. These promotion activities are done additionally to other duties and there is only one EURAXESS office responsible for two countries. The Australian NCP is based in Brussels. The time difference and long distance makes it harder for Australian institutions and individuals to make contact. Due to many other tasks to take care of there is little time to deal with MSCA, its promotion or guidance of applicants. MSCAdvocacy suggests to support the Australian NCP and EURAXESS Australia and New Zealand with dedicated information material catering to the needs of Australia.

AUS-02

There is a widespread narrative in Australia on Horizon Europe in general and therefore also MSCA as a closed door for Australian institutions. MSCAdvocacy suggests to provide a central record of former Australian recipients of MSCA actions twice a year that is easily accessible for Australian HEIs, in order to raise the message. The information material to be disseminated e.g. by EURAXESS should contain best practice examples in order to “tell a story” on MSCA in Australia. In order to provide the data, MSCAdvocacy would need access to ECorda contract data from DG EAC.

AUS-03

As a non-associated country, Australian institutions are not able to initiate Staff Exchanges or Doctoral Network projects. They need to be approached by their European partners. Many European HEIs are not aware that they can include Australia in these activities. MSCAdvocacy suggests that promotion activities in EU-MS should draw attention to this possibility. Australian representatives of HEIs/RPOs or Australian officials located in Europe should be invited to such events. MSCAdvocacy could reach out to NCPs from EU-MS and propose to invite EURAXESS AUS&NZL as a speaker and representatives of Australian HEIs that have an interest in increasing their participation (e.g. University of Melbourne).





Useful Links

For more information & learn how to participate in the [EU and Australia's science and technology cooperation](#)

Visit the [Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions website](#) to explore all the opportunities offered by the programme

The [Australian MSCA National Contact Point](#) provides information on the programme and help applicants develop their projects

[Euraxess Australia & New Zealand](#) provides support services for professional researchers, including hosting offers, PhD and postdoctoral vacancies funded by the MSCA

Join the [Oceania General Interest Group of the Marie Curie Alumni Association](#) to communicate, to share, to help, and to get help

[Support](#) for existing and future MSCA National Contact Points



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