



# DIGI+ MSCA Fellowship Programme

## Guide for Applicants

### Call 2 – 2024

Please read this document **CAREFULLY** before registering as an applicant

#### Important dates

Call opens	31 <sup>st</sup> May 2024
Application deadline	23 <sup>rd</sup> August 2024 The application system will close at 17:00 (Irish time). Applications cannot be accepted after this time.
Eligibility check and Ethics check	August - September 2024
Remote Peer Review	October - December 2024
Interviews for shortlisted candidates*	From December 2024 Onwards
Successful applicants informed *	January/February 2025
Applicants on reserve lists informed of outcome *	February 2025
Anticipated start date for successful applicants *	April/May 2025

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

History of Changes		
Version	Publication Date	Change



1.0	30 <sup>th</sup> June 2023	Final Version Call 1
2.0	31st May 2024	Revised Version Call 2

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## **1. Purpose of the Guide for Applicants**

This guide provides practical information to potential applicants to assist in preparing and applying for a DIGI+ Fellowship. In addition, it provides a general overview of the scheme and the assessment process.

Applicants should also review the Terms and Conditions document and information published on the DIGI+ website. Applications should be made through the DIGI+ website (except where the 'Researchers at Risk' policy applies).

## **2. The DIGI+ Programme**

### **2.1 About DIGI+**

DIGI+ is a world-class research fellowship programme, cofunded by Marie Skłodowska-Curie (MSCA), on Sustainable Digital Transformation that aims for a new generation of creative, entrepreneurial and innovative researcher leaders, able to face current and future challenges aligned with the EU's Digital and Green Agenda. Driven by the ambition of sustainable ecosystems, the DIGI+ research programme is focused on developing innovative digital transformation approaches addressing cross-disciplinary challenges, relevant to current policies and strategies in the European Research Area.

DIGI+ has brought together partners that cultivate excellence by extending the traditional academic research setting, equipping researchers with a tailored combination of research-specific and transferable skills that will enhance career prospects in both the academic and non-academic sectors. DIGI+ is embedded within Ireland's leading SFI-funded research centres, Lero and ADAPT, bringing together a group of world-leading experts. Together with outstanding working conditions that support both family and career, DIGI+ thus provides the fellows with an excellent career perspective. DIGI+ will impact on research, policy, standards and digital skills. DIGI+ fellows will be able to convert knowledge and ideas to drive digital transformation for economic and social benefit, with sustainability a key parameter. DIGI+ research helps to establish a set of innovative, multidisciplinary Digital Transformation Paths supporting the EU sustainability goals and helping to form sustainable, net-zero economies, a key aim within the EU for the next decade.

DIGI+ fellowships are offered to both junior and more experienced Postdoctoral Researchers. The programme will offer 20 prestigious, two-year fellowships across two calls over a 60-month period to advance digital transformation practices in four multidisciplinary research themes: 1) Innovative Business Models and Data Ecosystems; 2) Digital Culture and Skills; 3) Data Governance; 4) Innovative Digital Technologies and Adoption aligned with the EU sustainable development goals. DIGI+ applicants will have the freedom to choose their own research topic, their supervisor, and their secondment host. Secondments must be relevant to the fellow's research project and to his/her own career development as outlined in the fellow's personal career development plan (PCDP, an integral element of the DIGI+ training and development programme). Engagement with the proposed supervisors during the application process will ensure projects can gain the maximum benefit from the research supervisor's expertise and industry collaboration opportunities.

### 2.3 About Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions

Internationally respected in industry and academia, a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship is a recognised mark of research excellence. The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA), named after the double Nobel Prize winning Polish-French scientist famed for her work on radioactivity, and aim to support researchers at all stages of their careers irrespective of nationality. Researchers working across all disciplines, from life-saving healthcare to ‘blue-sky’ science, are eligible for funding, typically through fixed-term fellowships.

Mobility, training, and personal development are key factors in any MSCA scheme. Therefore, the actions also support industry doctorates, combining academic research study with work in companies, and often include innovative training that enhances employability and career development.

#### What are the long-term benefits of an MSCA Fellowship?

- MSCA Fellows’ publications are more-often cited than equivalent peers and are more frequently published on influential scientific journals.
- MSCA fellows are more successful in applying for European Research Council (ERC)’s competitive grants for high quality research.
- MSCA Fellows achieve professorship titles more frequently than others and are more likely to hold principal investigator positions.

#### DIGI+ as a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action

DIGI+ is a COFUND Action, on the MSCA programme. This means that DIGI+ fellowships are part funded by the EU, and part by the NUIM. While the prestige and long-term benefit of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship remains for our fellows, the disciplinary field of the programme is focused on four core research areas with the track record of the host institutions in these areas assured.

In contrast to the MSCA Individual Fellowship schemes, where the candidate is required to propose and execute their own training and development programme alongside their technical project, in DIGI+ this support will be designed, facilitated, and monitored. The Fellows therefore benefit from a network of peers across Ireland.

### 3. Fellowship Details

DIGI+ will offer 20 prestigious, two-year Marie Skłodowska-Curie (MSCA) fellowships across two calls over a 60-month period. DIGI+ fellowships are offered to both, junior and more experienced Postdoctoral Researchers (Table 1).

*Table 1- DIGI+ Research experience and mobility requirements*

DIGI+ Fellowship	Research Experience	Mobility Requirement
Level 1 (Junior)	At the time of the call deadline, applicants must be a maximum of 4 years from the date of award of the (first) doctoral degree. In line with the MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowship (PF) call, this limit can be extended for the following reasons: Maternity leave (18 months, 548 days per child born after PhD	Fellowships are open to candidates of any nationality who shall not have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies,

	award date, or the exact maternity leave duration, whichever is longest); Paternity leave (exact duration per child born after the PhD award date); Research in a non-associated TC (only for nationals or long-term residents of MS or AC, wishing to reintegrate in Europe); Time spent not working in research; Long-term sick leave (periods > 30 days)	etc.) in Ireland for more than 12 months in the three years immediately prior to the call deadline*
Level 2 (Experienced)	At the time of the call deadline, applicants must be in possession of a doctoral degree and four or more years' postdoctoral research experience.	

\* The following periods are not taken into account: a) compulsory national service; b) time spent as part of a procedure for obtaining refugee status under the Geneva Convention; c) short stays (such as holidays), i.e., the researcher did not reside or did not have their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in the country during that period.

DIGI+ is positioned at the intersection between ecosystems and business, digital technologies, ethics, responsible innovation, and governance. Fellows will propose their own original research ideas structured along four broad multidisciplinary research themes. Also, all fellows will be required to complete a mandatory secondment in a non-academic organization.

The DIGI+ programme will train 20 high-potential and excellent postdoctoral researchers (PRs) with the skills needed to become future leaders, that are able to drive the digital transformation for the next decade with the ambition to establish a sustainable society.

### 3.1 Duration of the fellowship

The total duration of each fellowship is two years.

### 3.2 Research Themes

DIGI+ will adhere to the COFUND principle of 'individual-driven mobility' meaning that the applicants will have the freedom to choose their research project within the broad remit of the programme. The proposed projects must relate to the four broad research themes of DIGI+.

The four broad multidisciplinary research themes:

- 1) Innovative Business Models and Data Ecosystems;**
- 2) Digital Culture and Skills;**
- 3) Data Governance;**
- 4) Innovative Digital Technologies and Adoption.**

DIGI+ will offer fellows the opportunity to establish their own research lines, providing access to SMEs, community gateways, policymakers and international experts from computing, business, and social science joined by the ambitious aim to create sustainable ecosystems.

### 3.3 Academic Supervisors

Prior to creating an application, the applicant must contact a DIGI+ supervisor to discuss their proposal and obtain their consent and support for supervising the project.

Applicants must prepare their applications in consultation with the proposed supervisors. Interaction with supervisors can be beneficial in the proposal writing phase. However, it is important to note that while supervisors offer guidance, they do not participate in the recruitment process or decision-making. Specifically, the supervisor's approval is not required for application submission. Please see the website for a list of participating academic supervisors:

<https://digipluscofund.eu/supervisors/>

Whilst the applicant can choose their individual research project, the topic must be aligned with DIGI+'s strategic vision and core research themes. The proposal must also align with the research interests of the applicant's prospective supervisor.

### 3.4 Mandatory Industrial Secondment

All DIGI+ fellows must go on a 6-month **mandatory** intersectoral secondment to a non-academic organisation that must be relevant to the fellow's research project and to his/her own career development. Secondments must be 6 months in duration and may be a single period or where the research warrants the period could be broken up into shorter stays of at least 2 months duration each. See secondment eligibility criteria: [Eligibility Criteria | DIGI+ EU Cofund \(digipluscofund.eu\)](#)

The timing, duration and technical objective of non-academic secondments **must be planned in the research proposal**, and, where possible, a suggested secondment host should be identified. To allow for applications where secondment details cannot be finalised prior to submission, secondment hosts will not be evaluated as part of the selection process. Successful applicants will be supported in finalising a secondment host and supervisor by the primary supervisor and the Operational Support Team prior to the start of the fellowship.

Eligible secondment hosts are non-academic research performing organisations located anywhere in the world. Applicants will be provided with a list of possible secondment organisations (Table 2) but are free to suggest additional (national/international) secondment hosts provided they fit with the developmental needs of the fellow and/or the research project. In the event that a proposed secondment host is not listed, the candidate should provide us with the contact details so that we can initiate discussions with the potential secondment host.

DIGI+ fellows may undertake additional, interdisciplinary short scientific visits to international/national collaborators of up to one week duration, provided they fit with the individual developmental needs of the fellow and/or the research project.



Table 2- Possible DIGI+ Secondment Hosts (Associated Partners)

Donegal County Council (Ireland)*	accelopmen Schweiz AG (Switzerland)
Mayo County Council (Ireland)*	Singular Logic (Greece)
Leitrim County Council (Ireland)*	Tourismus Interaktiv GmbH (Austria)
Expleo Technology Ltd (Ireland)	Banbridge District Enterprises Ltd (UK)*
Meath Enterprise Centre Co Ltd (Ireland)*	Keywater Fisheries Ltd (Ireland)
Health Service Executive (Ireland)*	Creditsafe Services Ltd (Ireland)
UNIVIV One Health Solutions (Ireland)	Talent Cloud (Ireland)
Bridgecastle Information Management Ltd (Ireland)	Clydville Investments (Ireland)

\* public sector / not for profit

## 4. Eligibility Criteria

To be considered eligible, applicants must fulfil the following eligibility criteria:

1. Applicant eligibility
2. Project eligibility
3. Secondment eligibility
4. Supervisor eligibility

### 4.1 Applicant eligibility

Applicants may be of any nationality and must agree to the programme's T&Cs. Applicants must be in possession of a doctoral degree at the deadline of the DIGI+ call for which they are applying. Researchers who have successfully defended their doctoral thesis and fulfilled the formal requirements for the doctorate but who have not yet formally been awarded the doctoral degree will be considered as PRs and will be eligible to apply. Those candidates require that the doctoral award has formally been awarded prior to the start of their fellowship.

Two levels of DIGI+ fellowship will be available depending on the research experience of the candidate. Applicants must comply with the DIGI+ Mobility Rule (Table 1- DIGI+ Research experience and mobility requirements). DIGI+ will not predefine the number of fellowships of either experience level available in each call for applicants.

### 4.2 Project eligibility

Proposals must describe a research project to be implemented during a 2-year period. Projects must adhere to the ethical standards applicable to the DIGI+ programme. The proposal topic must be in line with the broad DIGI+ research themes and address digital transformation challenges supporting the EU sustainability goals. Applications must be prepared in consultation with the proposed supervisor. Applicants may contact, discuss and seek advice from the proposed supervisors. The proposed supervisor can advise in the proposal writing; The supervisors will have no role in the recruitment process or decision

making and specifically, supervisor's approval is not required for submission.

### **4.3 Secondment eligibility**

The timing, duration and technical objective of non-academic secondments must be planned in the research proposal, and, where possible, a suggested secondment host should be identified. To allow for applications where secondment details cannot be finalised prior to submission, secondment hosts will not be evaluated as part of the selection process. Successful applicants will be supported in finalising a secondment host and supervisor by the primary supervisor and the Operational Support Team prior to the start of the fellowship. Secondments must be 6 months in duration and may be a single period or where the research warrants the period could be broken up into shorter stays of at least 2 months duration each. Eligible secondment hosts are non-academic research performing organisations located anywhere in the world. DIGI+ fellows may undertake additional, interdisciplinary short scientific visits to international/national collaborators of up to one week duration, provided they fit with the individual developmental needs of the fellow and/or the research project as identified through the use of the PCDP. The associated partners can participate at network-wide training events and offer opportunities for short scientific visits to reflect, discuss and receive feedback on ongoing research.

### **4.4 Supervisor eligibility**

Successful applicants will have two supervisors: a Primary Academic Supervisor and a Secondment Supervisor. Furthermore, an Independent Interdisciplinary Mentor (agreed between a fellow and primary supervisor) will form part of the Supervisory Team. The applicant must propose a Primary Academic Supervisor from the list of potential supervisors provided on the DIGI+ website during the application stage. (see also note in Section 3.3.)

Additional measures and training are in place for supervisors with less than 5 years' experience in postdoctoral supervision. All supervisors must align with the principles and requirements outlined in the European Charter for Researchers: The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers and must have proven expertise in the research area.

### **4.5 Application requirements**

Each applicant may submit one application per call. Resubmissions for the second call are encouraged. Applications should be made through the online proposal submission system hosted on the DIGI+ website. Only complete applications, submitted on or before the call deadline will be included in the selection process. Applicants will receive an automatic acknowledgement of receipt of the submitted proposal; this acknowledgement gives no guarantee of proposal eligibility.

## **5. Ethics**

DIGI+ will comply fully with the HE ethics policy, including those in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU and the European Convention on Human Rights and its supplementary protocols. DIGI+ will not fund 1) research activities aiming at human cloning for reproductive purposes, 2) research activities intended to modify the genetics of human beings that could make such changes heritable, 3) research activities intended to create human embryos for the purpose of research or for stem cell procurement.

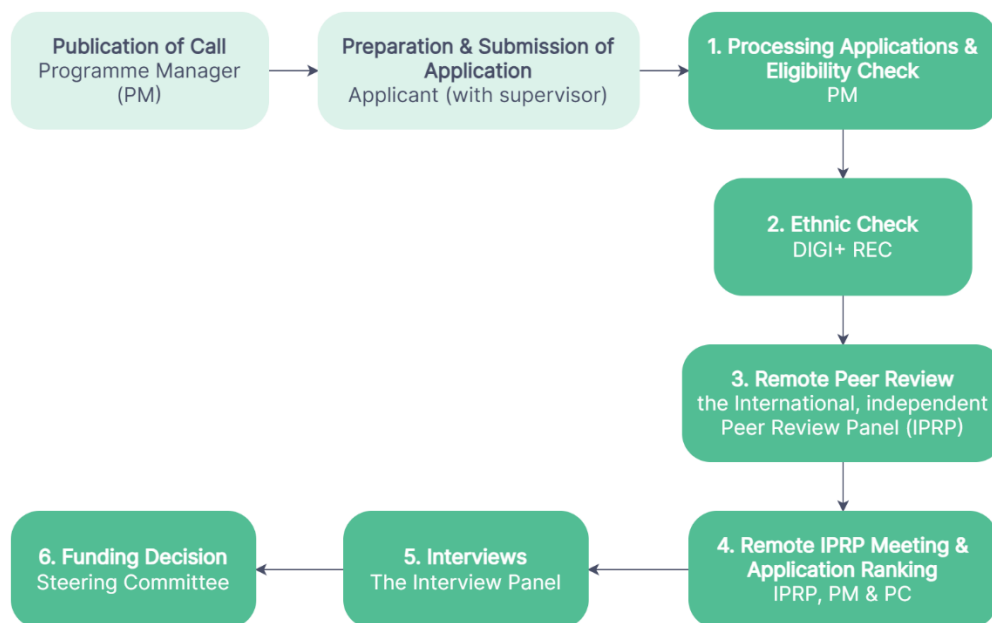
Applicants will be required to complete an Ethics Issues Table. If ethical issues arise, the applicant will append the additional information and documentation required by the HE Ethics Self-Assessment. The DIGI+ Ethical Review Committee (REC) will review all proposals for which ethical issues are flagged. Ethical approval for all projects must be obtained prior to the project start date from the REC at the fellow’s host institution. A copy of the ethical approval must be forwarded to the PM. All DIGI+ hosts have strict procedures for ethical approval in line with European ethical regulations and procedures.

## 6. Application Process

### 6.1 Publication of the Fellowship Call

The application process as depicted below starts with the publication of the DIGI+ Call, along with this document and associated application templates. Call 2 opens on May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024. All application templates can be found on the DIGI+ website once the call is open.

Each applicant may submit one application per call. Applicants must prepare the proposal in liaison with their proposed academic supervisor.



### 6.2 Preparations of the Application

Applicants are encouraged to start preparing their applications as early as possible. Please review all relevant documentation, which includes this guide and T&Cs if you seek clarification on any items.

The following steps should be followed:

- Check your eligibility: [Eligibility Criteria | DIGI+ EU Cofund \(digipluscofund.eu\)](https://digipluscofund.eu)
- Optionally, complete an expression of interest form, providing basic contact details (<https://digipluscofund.eu/contact/>).

- Contact your preferred academic supervisor(s) from our list of supervisors (<https://digipluscofund.eu/supervisors/>). You must contact a DIGI+ supervisor whose research interest is aligned with your research proposal before applying and have the supervisor's agreement to support your application. You may contact the supervisor with your project idea. The supervisor will confirm whether they are happy to work with you on your chosen topic and may offer guidance on developing the research project. Include the DIGI+ programme manager in your correspondence. If the supervisor is unable to support your application, contact [info@digipluscofund.eu](mailto:info@digipluscofund.eu) and the programme manager will see if other supervisors can be found.
- Start preparing your proposal.
- Contact and obtain the support of your preferred non-academic secondment host(s). During the application stage, the DIGI+ host supervisor will help the applicant to identify an appropriate secondment organisation and supervisor in the non-academic sector.
- Obtain a letter of support from your proposed academic supervisor.
- Prepare your application.
- Submit all required documents on or before the Call deadline.

### 6.3 A Complete Application

A complete application consists of the following: Parts A, B, C, and D which are outlined below. The application templates are available for download on the DIGI+ website once the call is open. Templates must be followed. Instructions are included in each of the templates to assist you when writing your proposal to make sure you include all the necessary information required in the programme.

Applicants will be required to complete an Ethics Issues Table. If ethical issues arise, the applicant will append the additional information and documentation required by the HE Ethics Self-Assessment.

**Part A:** Administrative information on the applicant, project, academic host, and supervisor. Applicants must state that they have considered and reported all ethical issues and agree to the DIGI+ T&Cs. Applicants must indicate the project's thematic area, up to 5 keywords and submit a 2000-character proposal summary.

**Part B:** The project proposal uploaded as a PDF-file (max. 10 pages). The Guide for Applicants (GFA) will provide a template which applicants must follow, based on the MSCA PF template. Applicants will need to indicate whether they used an AI tools in their proposal development.

**Part C:** The applicant's CV (template will be provided) uploaded as a PDF-file (max. 5 pages)

**Part D:** the completed Ethics Issues Table.

#### Ethics Self-Assessment

Applicants who indicate that ethical issues are associated with their research, are required to provide additional information and documentation. Applicants must present an explanation based on Horizon Europe self-assessment guide and provide all pertinent documentation. If documentation is not ready to be presented, the applicant should explain

how and when it will be obtained. Please refer to Horizon Europe Guidance on Ethic Self-Assessment.

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/how-to-complete-your-ethics-self-assessment\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/how-to-complete-your-ethics-self-assessment_en.pdf)

**Other documents required:**

- Letters of commitment (may be a scanned email) from the academic supervisor to be included in Part A
- Letter of commitment from the secondment host. If unable to secure a letter of commitment from the secondment host, this letter must be obtained within 6 months of starting his/her fellowship.

**Please note that proposals must respect the following minimum standards:**

- a minimum font size of 11 points, except for the Gantt chart and tables where the minimum font size is 8 points
- single line spacing
- A4 page size
- margins (top, bottom, left, right) of at least 15 mm (not including any footers or headers)
- a clearly readable font (e.g., Arial or Times New Roman). Literature references should be placed as footnotes at the bottom of the page in which they are mentioned, in font 8 or 9. They also count toward the page limit.

#### **6.4 Submission of Application**

Applications **must be submitted in PDF format** through the DIGI+ website (<https://digipluscofund.eu/>) before the deadline of August 23<sup>rd</sup> 2024. The application system will close at 5pm (Irish time). Applications cannot be accepted after this time.

Applicants will receive an automatic acknowledgement of receipt of the submitted proposal; this acknowledgement gives no guarantee of proposal eligibility.

- All applications must be complete and in English.
- All applications must have confirmed support of the proposed academic supervisor.
- One application per call may be submitted. However, unsuccessful applications will be encouraged for resubmission at future calls.
- The DIGI+ application templates must be used.
- Researchers at risk who might not be able to submit an application in the aforementioned manner, should contact the DIGI+ Programme management team ([info@digipluscofund.eu](mailto:info@digipluscofund.eu)) to discuss an alternative submission arrangement.
- Only applications that are complete and submitted before or on the call deadline will be included in the selection process.

## **7. Researchers at Risk**

The DIGI+ Programme is open to PRs of any nationality resident anywhere in the world. DIGI+ will support applications from researchers who are displaced by conflict, or whose situation makes it difficult to pursue their research careers, both during the application process and once on the Fellowship in Ireland.

Such support will be addressed on a case-by-case basis and Researchers at Risk will be able to discuss these supports with the DIGI+ PM. Supports will include, but will not be limited to:

- 1)** Submission of applications by post where online application requirements discriminate against the researcher's personal circumstances,
- 2)** Application of eligibility criteria appropriately to ensure researchers who have suspended their activities while seeking refugee status are not disadvantaged.

For applicants who are applying for refugee status in Ireland, time spent in that process will not count as a time resident in Ireland.

## **8. Overview of the Selection Process**

The selection process will be comprised of the following stages, including an international peer review and an interview stage.

### **8.1 Stage 1: Eligibility Check**

After the call closing date, the proposal eligibility will be reviewed. Any cases with potential eligibility concerns related to mobility or research experience will be discussed. Additional information may be requested from applicants if necessary. Applicants will be notified of their application status at each stage.

### **8.2 Stage 2.1: Ethics Check**

The DIGI+ REC will review all eligible proposals for potential ethics issues. They will provide comments and/or recommendations through the online system for inclusion in the Remote Review Report (RRR). Proposals with ethical clearance will proceed, while those without clearance will be deemed ineligible.

### **8.3 Stage 2.2: Remote Peer Review**

Each application will be remotely reviewed by three members of the International Peer Review Panel (IPRP), selected from the DIGI+ reviewer pool.

### **8.4 Stage 2.3: Remote IPRP Meeting & Application Ranking**

A meeting will be held to discuss and approve allocated scores, establish the ranking list of applicants, and provide feedback.

### **8.5 Stage 2.4: Interviews**

The Interview Panel will include experts from relevant fields. All interviews will be conducted in English and will last 60 minutes. Applicants will be asked to prepare a short 10-minute presentation on his/her proposal. The presentation should include a scientific overview of the project, career development plan, training objectives and project impact. The

presentation will be followed by questions from the interview panel. Applicants may be interviewed on any aspect relating to Excellence, Impact, or Implementation of the fellowship. In addition, the interview panel will focus on the match between the applicant, the project, and the host and on the applicant’s motivation.

Interviews will be held within 4 weeks from the invitation for interview and will be held face-to-face where feasible, or alternatively through video/remote Teams call following the NUIM recruitment and selection procedures.

### 8.6 Stage 3: Funding Decisions

All interviewed applicants will be placed on a ranked list, which will be presented to the DIGI+ Steering Committee with the recommendation that the top 10 candidates per call be funded. The SC will endorse the final funding decision based on the recommendations of the IPRP and the Interview Panel. Up to 10 remaining applicants scoring above threshold after the interview stage will be placed on a reserve list. All applicants will receive information and feedback at this stage, or, if successful, an offer letter.

### 8.7 Redress

A Redress Committee (RC) will be established.

Applicants wishing to appeal a decision must contact the PM ([info@digipluscofund.eu](mailto:info@digipluscofund.eu)) no later than 30 days after receiving evaluation results. Redress requests can only be made regarding procedural issues or received incorrect application of eligibility criteria, and not with regard to the scientific judgments of the remote reviewers or members of the interview panels.

Applicants will be informed about the results of redress within 30 days from their request. An Interview will be organised if redress results in a score which ranks the application amongst those applicants called for interview. Decisions from the RC are binding.

## 9. Evaluation Criteria

For the international peer review process, each remote reviewer will be requested to provide a score between 0 (very poor) and 5 (excellent) for each of the 3-evaluation criterion shown in Table 4- Scoring system to be applied to the DIGI+ applications evaluation criterion and Table 5.

An overall threshold of 70% (3.5/5) will be applied to the final weighted score and therefore proposals with a score lower than 3.5 will not proceed to the interview stage, regardless of the number of proposals received and/or budget available.

*Table 3- Evaluation Criteria for the Fellowship programme*

Excellence	Impact	Quality and efficiency of the implementation
Quality and pertinence of the project’s research and innovation objectives (and the extent to	Credibility of the measures to enhance the career perspectives and employability of the researcher and	Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, training and funding plan, assessment of risks and

which they are ambitious, and go beyond the state of the art)	contribution to his/her <b>skills development</b>	appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages
Soundness of the proposed methodology (including <b>interdisciplinary approaches</b> , consideration of the <b>gender dimension and diversity aspects</b> , and the quality of proposed <b>open science and data management practices</b> )	<b>Suitability and quality of the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts</b> , as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities	Quality and capacity of the proposed host institution and participating organisations, including hosting arrangements, IP arrangements and secondment objectives
<b>Quality of the supervision, training plan and of the two-way transfer of knowledge</b> between the researcher and the host	Feasibility and quality of the <b>measures to sustain and scale research</b> , as set out in the funding plan and related activities	Quality and Alignment of <b>personal career development goals and plan</b> with the proposed research, funding, exploitation and training plan
<b>Quality and appropriateness of the researcher's professional experience, competences and skills</b>	Alignment of the proposed research to <b>support the EU Sustainability goals</b> , Digital Europe Programme, Regional Development and Policy making	

Table 4- Scoring system to be applied to the DIGI+ applications evaluation criterion

	Excellence	Impact	Implementation	
Weighting of scores	50%	30%	20%	Overall threshold of 70% applied to total weighted score.
Priority in case of <i>ex aequo</i>	1	2	3	

Table 5- Scoring system to be applied to the DIGI+ applications evaluation criterion

Score	Description	Score	Description
0	<b>Very Poor.</b> Proposal <b>fails</b> to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing data.	3	<b>Good.</b> Proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of flaws are present.
1	<b>Poor.</b> The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are fundamental weaknesses.	4	<b>Very Good.</b> Proposal addresses well the criterion, but a small number of flaws are present.
2	<b>Fair.</b> Proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant gaps.	5	<b>Excellent.</b> Proposal addresses all relevant aspects of criterion, and any shortcomings are minor.

In cases where proposals have exactly the same score, they will be ordered on the ranked lists following the priority as outlined in Table 4. If the priority in the case of *ex aequo* measure does not resolve the situation, then all concerned proposals will go through to the next selection stage.

Following the interview, the interview panel will reach a consensus score using the same



evaluation criteria, priority weighting and threshold as the remote review. After the interview, the PM will add up the final weighted score for the peer review process and the consensus score from the interview.

The final mark for the applicant will be composed equally from the peer review of the written proposal (50%) and the interview (50%) (with priority in case of ex aequo). This will lead to a final score between 0 and 10 with an inbuilt overall threshold of 7 (70%). Highest scoring candidates above the threshold will be included in a ranked list of 10 candidates per call for funding approval by the DIGI+ SC, plus up to 10 remaining applicants scoring above threshold laced on a reserve list.

## 10. Ethics

The DIGI+ Fellowship Programme receives research proposals in the general research area of emerging complex systems, and applicants are free to choose their research topic, provided it falls within the DIGI+ overall strategic research areas. All applicants must complete an Ethical Issues Table as part of their proposal submission. If an ethical issue arises, the applicants will be obliged to provide additional information and documentation as required in by the Horizon Europe Guidance on Ethics Self-Assessment as part of their submission. Further information on ethics is available to the applicants on the website. Projects will be required to get ethics approval from the host institution before the project start date. The applicants will forward the approvals to the programme management. All host institutions have ethics committees that are able to give approval. The DIGI+ Research Ethics Committee will review all proposals for which ethical issues are flagged; formal ethical approval for all projects must be obtained by the applicant prior to the start of the project.

There are partners from non-EU countries. In case activities undertaken in non-EU countries raise ethics issues, the fellow in conjunction with the Host (beneficiary) will confirm that the research conducted outside the EU is legal in at least one EU Member State.

The ethics issues table is shown below.

### ETHICS ISSUES TABLE

Please complete the ethical assessment table below, indicating “yes” or “no” in the corresponding box:

<b>1. HUMAN EMBRYONIC STEM CELLS AND HUMAN EMBRYOS</b>	
Does your research involve Human Embryonic Stem Cells (hESCs)?	YES / NO
Does your research involve the use of human embryos?	YES / NO
Does your activity involve the use of other human embryonic or foetal tissues / cells?	YES / NO
<b>2. HUMANS</b>	
Does your research involve human participants?	YES / NO
Does your activity involve interventions (physical also including imaging technology, behavioural treatments, tracking and tracing, etc.) on the study participants?	YES / NO
Does your activity involve conducting a clinical study as defined by the Clinical	YES / NO

Trial Regulation 536/2014 (using pharmaceuticals, biologicals, radiopharmaceuticals, or advanced therapy medicinal products)?	
<b>3. HUMAN CELLS / TISSUES</b>	
Does your activity involve the use of human cells or tissues (other than those covered by section 1)?	YES / NO
<b>4. PROTECTION OF PERSONAL DATA</b>	
Does your activity involve processing of personal data?	YES / NO
Does your activity involve further processing of previously collected personal data (including use of preexisting data sets or sources, merging existing data sets)?	YES / NO
Is it planned to export personal data (data transfer) from the EU to non EU countries? Specify the type of personal data and countries involved	YES / NO
Is it planned to import personal data (data transfer) from non-EU countries into the EU or from a non-EU country to another non-EU country? Specify the type of personal data and countries involved	YES / NO
Does your activity involve the processing of personal data related to criminal convictions or offences?	YES / NO
<b>5. ANIMALS</b>	
Does your research involve animals?	YES / NO
<b>6. THIRD COUNTRIES</b>	
Will some of the activities be carried out in non-EU countries? Specify the countries	
In case non-EU countries are involved, do the activities undertaken in these countries raise potential ethics issues? Specify the countries	YES / NO
Is it planned to use local resources (e.g. animal and/or human tissue samples, genetic material, live animals, human remains, materials of historical value, endangered fauna or flora samples, etc.)?	YES / NO
Is it planned to import any material (other than data) from non-EU countries into the EU or from a non EU country to another non-EU country? For data imports, see section 4. For imports of human cells or tissues, see section 3. Specify the material and countries involved	YES / NO
Is it planned to export any material (other than data) from the EU to non-EU countries? For data exports, see section 4. Specify the material and countries involved	YES / NO
Does your activity involve low and/or lower-middle income countries? If yes, detail the benefit-sharing actions planned	YES / NO
Could the situation in the country put the individuals taking part in the activity at risk?	YES / NO
<b>7. ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH AND SAFETY</b>	
Does this activity involve the use of substances or processes (or technologies) that may cause harm to the environment, to animals or plants (during the implementation of the activity or further to the use of the results, as a possible impact)?	YES / NO

For activities involving animal experiments, see section 5.	
Does this activity deal with endangered fauna and/or flora / protected areas?	YES / NO
Does this activity involve the use of substances or processes (or technologies) that may cause harm to humans, including those performing the activity (during the implementation of the activity or further to the use of the results, or the deployment of the technology as a possible impact)? For activities involving human participants, see section 2.	YES / NO
<b>8. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE</b>	
Does this activity involve the development, deployment and/or use of Artificial Intelligence-based systems?	YES / NO
Could the AI based system/technique potentially stigmatise or discriminate against people (e.g. based on sex, race, ethnic or social origin, age, genetic features, disability, sexual orientation, language, religion or belief, membership to a political group, or membership to a national minority)?	YES / NO
Does the AI system/technique interact, replace or influence human decision-making processes (e.g. issues affecting human life, health, well-being or human rights, or economic, social or political decisions)?	YES / NO
Does the AI system/technique have the potential to lead to negative social (e.g. on democracy, media, labour market, freedoms, educational choices, mass surveillance) and/or environmental impacts either through intended applications or plausible alternative uses?	YES / NO
Does this activity involve the use of AI in a weapon system?	YES / NO
Does the AI to be developed/used in the project raise any other ethical issues not covered by the questions above (e.g., subliminal, covert or deceptive AI, AI that is used to stimulate addictive behaviours, lifelike humanoid robots, etc.)?	YES / NO
<b>9. OTHER ETHICS ISSUES</b>	
Are there any other ethics issues that should be taken into consideration?	YES / NO

## 11. Funding

DIGI+ Fellow's salaries are aligned with the national SFI Postdoctoral Salary Scales, according to the level of experience of PRs. This can be seen in the job description in the current call that is available on the DIGI+ website.

Please note that salaries received by the fellow will be liable for taxes and/or other deductions. Information on Irish taxation can be found at the Office of Revenue Commissioners website. <https://revenue.ie/>

## 12. Training and Career Development Aspects

DIGI+ aims to enable fellows to develop into a new generation of creative, entrepreneurial, and innovative researchers, able to face current and future challenges. The aim of the DIGI+ training programme is to support the Fellows' PCDP and to meet the changing needs of

digital transformation researchers (both in the academic and non-academic setting). The DIGI+ training programme has been developed with considerable non-academic input and all fellows will receive training in industry specific transferable skills. Some non-academic partners will be involved in providing training at bootcamps.

The DIGI+ training programme will be coordinated by the DIGI+ PM. It will be reviewed every 6 months by the Supervisory Board and will offer a wide range of professional development interventions, including:

- World-leading interdisciplinary and intersectoral research projects;
- The support of an interdisciplinary and intersectoral Supervisory Team;
- Complementary advanced research and transferable skills training;
- DIGI+ bootcamps based with in person networking opportunities;
- Intersectoral secondments and short scientific visits of up to one week to DIGI+ partners;
- Specific training in communication and dissemination, supported by mandatory participation in knowledge dissemination, public engagement, and related outreach activities;
- a 2-day DIGI+ induction training at the start of all fellowships.

### **13. Support for the Fellows**

DIGI+ will support fellows from application during their fellowship and afterwards. All documentation will be available once the Call is published. Documentation includes this document (application guidelines), T&Cs, and application forms.

#### **13.1 DIGI+ Helpdesk**

DIGI+ will run an application helpdesk during the selection and evaluation period to answer queries and provide support connecting with supervisors. Queries can be posted to the project manager through the dedicated programme email address [info@digipluscofund.eu](mailto:info@digipluscofund.eu). All questions from the applicants will be publicly shared with answers in a non-anonymous format and added to the FAQ section.

DIGI+ will also support applications from researchers who are displaced by conflict, or whose situation makes it difficult to pursue their research careers, both during the application process and once on the Fellowship in Ireland. Such support will be addressed on a case-by-case basis and Researchers at Risk will be able to discuss these supports with the DIGI+ PM.

#### **13.2 EURAXESS Ireland Service Centre**

Applicants and Fellows can avail of a range of services offered by the Irish EURAXESS Office. EURAXESS.ie provides information on a range of issues and areas affecting researchers, including immigration and visas, employment law, healthcare, childcare, social services, and life in Ireland. It also operates the Irish Hosting Agreement scheme which offers a fast-track service for visa applications for organisations who wish to recruit non-EU researchers. Under the scheme visas are issued rapidly and work permits are not required. Researcher's families can accompany them immediately and may work while in Ireland and the researchers can remain in the country to look for a job after their contract ends.

## 14. Relevant Links

### **Euraxess:**

[www.euraxess.eu](http://www.euraxess.eu)

### **European ethical regulations and procedures:**

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/how-to-complete-your-ethics-self-assessment\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/how-to-complete-your-ethics-self-assessment_en.pdf)

### **The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers:**

[am509774CEE EN E4 \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/am509774CEE_EN_E4_europa.eu)

### **HE Ethics Self-Assessment:**

[how-to-complete-your-ethics-self-assessment\\_en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/how-to-complete-your-ethics-self-assessment_en.pdf)

## 15. Contact Details

**Email:** [info@digipluscofund.eu](mailto:info@digipluscofund.eu)

**Website:** <https://digipluscofund.eu/>

**LinkedIn:** <https://www.linkedin.com/company/digiplusmscacofund>

**Twitter:** @infoDIGIplus