



# GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS

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This guide aims to provide practical information to potential applicants on how to apply, together with a description of the assessment procedure.

For further and up-to-date information, please visit the website [www.coupled-itn.eu](http://www.coupled-itn.eu).



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## ABOUT ITN COUPLED

Supported and co-funded by the European Commission through the Horizon 2020 Marie Skłodowska Curie (MSCA) ITN Programme, the COUPLED European Training Network provides **15 PhD positions**.

The COUPLED European Training Network aims to attract international Early Stage Researchers for high quality PhD training. The aim of the programme is to increase the international, intersectoral and interdisciplinary mobility of researchers. The students will be selected for a **3-year advanced multidisciplinary research training, preferably starting July 2018 or earlier**.

### The research programme

Human consumption of food and agricultural products has a significant impact on the environment and the societies in the regions where agricultural goods are produced. Given Europe's large and growing land-use footprint abroad, Europe has a special responsibility to develop concepts and tools needed to achieve sustainability in an interconnected world. Different sectors, consumers, businesses and politicians are increasingly demanding more environmental and social sustainable land use both inside and outside Europe.

Yet, there is increasing recognition of the limitations of current research approaches to adequately understand and address the increasing complexity of land system dynamics, which are often characterised by strong non-linearity, feedback mechanisms, and local contexts, and where places of production, trade and consumption of land-based products are increasingly separated. Land systems are increasingly coupled across large distances via flows of biomass, capital, information and regulations. Given that distal couplings are often key in shaping how land is used, a new generation of scientists and entrepreneurs is needed.

The project **COUPLED. Operationalising Telecoupling for Solving Sustainability Challenges for Land Use** aims to put the telecoupling approach into practice and to train a new generation of young scientists in trans- and interdisciplinary concepts and methodologies. **The future doctoral students learn**

- to understand processes and actors that influence land use in an increasingly interconnected world
- to consider distant, unexpected feedback and spillover and to account for their social and environmental impact
- to foster new and enhanced governance measures that can shape land use couplings to deliver more sustainable outcomes of land use decisions

### Participating host organisations

Selected researchers will enroll in one of the 15 positions offered by the 10 host organisations participating in the COUPLED network.

1. Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (Germany)
2. University of Bern (Switzerland)

3. Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Spain)
4. University of Copenhagen (Denmark)
5. Alpen-Adria Universität, Institute of Social Ecology Vienna (Austria)
6. Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (The Netherlands)
7. Leuphana University of Lüneburg (Germany)
8. Université catholique de Louvain (Belgium)
9. The Forest Trust (Switzerland)
10. Unilever U.K. (UK)

## CALL FOR APPLICANTS

### Why apply for a position in the COUPLED European Training Network?

ITNs are financially supported by the European Commission because they provide excellent research, training and career aspects. The benefits of being a PhD student in an ITN network:

- You will work in a **stimulating and creative learning environment** and in an **interdisciplinary** research training programme.
- You can already at a very early stage move forward with your **individual career** via training towards goals set in a Personal Career Development Plan.
- You will be engaged in **transdisciplinary experiences** with targeted secondments to practice communities, companies and NGOs.
- You will have the opportunity to acquire **lifetime skills** and optimum opportunities to build and extend your **international network** available to you throughout your professional career.
- You will have the opportunity to acquire outstanding **complementary training in transferable skills** (e.g. presentation techniques, networking, publishing, and outreach) as well as leadership, innovation and entrepreneurial skills.
- You will be advised by **excellent group leaders** – they are all outstanding in their research and trainings.

### Available positions

1. **Understanding conservation telecouplings** (Host: Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Germany)
2. **Social-ecological metabolism approaches to analyse telecouplings related to international trade** (Host: Alpen-Adria Universität, Institute of Social Ecology, Vienna, Austria)
3. **How can private companies promote sustainable land use through their supply chains** (Host: Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium)

4. **Impacts of changing lifestyles and ecosystem service demands** (Host: Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands)
5. **Measuring the effectiveness of corporate zero deforestation commitments in South East Asia** (Host: Unilever U.K., UK)
6. **Spill-over effects of demands for certified tropical products in Europe** (Host: University of Copenhagen, Denmark)
7. **Environmental impact assessments in a telecoupled world** (Host: Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands)
8. **Justices and injustices in the soy value chain** (Host: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain)
9. **Characterisation and visualisation of telecouplings in Large Scale Land Acquisitions** (Host: University of Bern, Switzerland)
10. **Stickiness in international trade of agricultural and forestry products** (Host: Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium)
11. **Exploring telecouplings between mining and land change in Africa** (Host: Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Germany)
12. **Governance institutions for sustainability in globally telecoupled systems** (Host: Leuphana University of Lüneburg, Germany)
13. **Land use impacts of the clean development mechanism in a telecoupled world** (Host: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain)
14. **Telecouplings, supply chain analysis and transparency** (Host: The Forest Trust, Switzerland)
15. **International forest conservation discourses and local decisions as telecoupled systems** (Host: University of Copenhagen, Denmark)

### Who can apply (eligibility criteria)?

- Your **educational background** is in the area Geography, Environmental Science, Sustainability Science, Conservation Biology, Development Studies, Ecology, Social Ecology, Human Ecology, Environmental Economics, Ecological Economics, Political Sciences, Social Anthropology or related fields.
- You have **completed a Master's degree** or equivalent at the time of recruitment.
- You are an **Early Stage Researcher**, meaning at the time of recruitment by the host organization, you shall be in the first four years (full-time equivalent research experience<sup>1</sup>) of your research career and have not been awarded a doctoral degree.
- The positions are open to all nationalities. However, your application complies with the European Commission's **mobility rule**, meaning at the time of recruitment by the host organization, you must not have resided or carried out your main activity (work, studies, etc.) in the country of the host organization for more than 12 months in the 3 years immediately before the reference date (start of the employment

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<sup>1</sup> Full-time equivalent research experience is measured from the date when you obtained the degree entitling you to embark on a doctorate (either in the country in which the degree was obtained or in the country in which you are recruited or seconded), even if a doctorate was never started or envisaged. Part-time research experience will be counted pro-rata.

contract). Compulsory national service and/or short stays such as holidays are not taken into account. For **position 5** and **14** this rule does not apply, however the appointed researcher shall not have spent more than 12 months in the 3 years immediately prior to the reference date in the same appointing organisation.

- You have excellent proficiency in **English** language.
- Participating host organisations may apply additional criteria.
- Only applications that are complete, in English and that have been submitted before the deadline will be considered eligible.

### Working conditions and salary

Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions (MSCA) offer attractive salary and working conditions.

- Selected candidates will have a fulltime employment contract for the duration of **36 months**.
- Selected candidates will receive a salary in accordance with the MSCA regulations for Early Stage Researchers. The basic gross salary (living allowance) is **€ 3.110** per month. A correction factor will be applied per country (see Table 1); therefore, the exact gross salary will be confirmed upon appointment. **Please consider that the net salary may be much lower due to taxes, social benefit premiums etc.**
- In addition to the living allowance, selected candidates will benefit from a mobility allowance of gross **€ 600** per month. Selected candidates who have a family at the time of recruitment qualify for an additional family allowance of gross **€ 500** per month.\*

Table 1. Country correction coefficients for ITN living allowance (H2020 Work Programme 2016-2017) for countries involved in COUPLED

Austria	104.8%
Belgium	100.0%
Denmark	135.3%
Germany	98.8%
Spain	97.6%
Switzerland	113.1%
The Netherlands	104.3%
UK	120.3%

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\* 'Family' means persons linked to the researcher by marriage (or a relationship with equivalent status to a marriage recognised by the legislation of the country where this relationship was formalised) or dependent children who are actually being maintained by the researcher.

## Timeline

Opening of the call	16 October 2017
Deadline for applications	24 November 2017
Decision on eligibility	01 December 2017
Selected candidates invited	03 January 2018
Skype/phone interviews	04–19 January 2018
Candidates selected	19–20 February 2018
Successful candidates informed	21-23 February 2018
Enrollment	01 July 2018 or earlier

## Content and submission of your application

Your application consists of two parts:

1. An online application form
2. One PDF file containing all your application files

### 1. Online application form

To submit your application, please fill in the requested data in the online application form, upload your application file and submit your application. The online application form is available on the website [www.coupled-itn.eu](http://www.coupled-itn.eu).

In the online form, you are requested to fill in different types of information. This information is aimed to facilitate the eligibility check of your application. Please consider the following:

- You may apply for a maximum of 3 positions in the COUPLED network.
- To indicate your (expected) whereabouts, please list the start/end dates, country and description of your main activity in the required section.
- Please list your whereabouts in chronological order, starting from 1 January 2015 and ending with 01 July 2018.
- Should you have resided in more than one country within the requested period, please use the “Add another whereabouts” to list multiple whereabouts. In case you have more whereabouts, please list them in your CV.
- If you have not graduated yet, please indicate the expected date of your degree being awarded. Please keep in mind that you need to have obtained your degree before the time of recruitment.
- Please list the names and contact details of two referees. Please inform your referees upfront on the possibility of them being contacted by a representative of the COUPLED network regarding your application. The referees are most likely to be contacted between November 2017 and March 2018.

## 2. Your application file

Your application should consist of the following documents, in the following order:

1. A complete Curriculum Vitae
2. A copy of your Master certificate (if you have not graduated yet, please provide a copy of your Bachelor certificate)
3. A copy of your grades (if you have not graduated yet, please include Bachelor grades and available grades for your Master)
4. A motivation letter (max. 1 page)
5. A draft proposal related to the ESR position(s) applied for (max. 2 pages for one project)
6. Copy of TOEFL or IELTS scores, if available

The copy of your TOEFL or IELTS scores is optional; all other documents are required. Failure to submit any of these documents will automatically result in a rejection of your application on formal grounds.

## SELECTION & EVALUATION PROCEDURE

### Eligibility check

All applications will be checked according to the eligibility criteria. Only eligible applications will be processed to the next phase.

- The applicant has completed a **Master's degree** or equivalent at the time of recruitment.
- The applicant is an **Early Stage Researcher**.
- The applicant complies with the **mobility rule** for the project(s) to apply for.
- The **application is complete**, in English and submitted through the online form before the deadline.

### Selection Procedure

Remaining candidates will be ranked by the principal supervisors of the ESR according to a point system (1-10), where points will be assigned for

- (1) Scientific background and merits to date
- (2) Motivation
- (3) Innovative nature of the draft proposal

Second, reference letters for top five candidates per ESR position will be requested and skype/phone interviews will be conducted with these candidates by the supervisors. All interviews will be conducted along a jointly established structure to ensure comparable selection.

Successful candidates will be contacted 21-23 February 2018 and offered a fellowship. All candidates will be registered at their respective universities; for the non-academic partners, the ESRs shall be registered by partner universities.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

For further and up-to-date information, please visit the website <http://www.coupled-itn.eu> or contact us at [info@coupled-itn.eu](mailto:info@coupled-itn.eu).