



GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS EUFOG DOCTORAL NETWORK

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	What are MSCA Doctoral Networks?	3
2.	Why choose EUFOG?	3
3.	Open Positions and Projects	9
4.	Who Can Apply:	11
4.1.	General EUFOG Eligibility Criteria	11
4.2	Specific requirements	12
5.	How to Apply: Application and Selection Process	13
5.1.	Formal Application	13
5.2.	Selection Process	14
5.3.	Interviews	14
5.5.	Recruitment	15
6.	Data Protection	15
7.	Further Enquiries	15
	Annex 1 - How to write a PhD research proposal	16



1. What are MSCA Doctoral Networks?

Doctoral Networks implement **doctoral programmes** by partnerships of organisations from different sectors across Europe and beyond to train highly skilled doctoral candidates, stimulate their creativity, enhance their innovation capacities and boost their employability in the long- term. They are one type of Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA), which is **the European Union (EU)'s flagship programme for doctoral education and postdoctoral training.**

Each doctoral candidate (DC) will:

- be enrolled in a **doctoral programme**;
- work **full-time** on the project;
- be recruited under an **employment contract** or equivalent direct contract which would confer similar benefits and social security coverage for a maximum period of 36 months.

The MSCA Doctoral Network programme offers highly competitive and attractive working and salary conditions. Each DC will receive a **living allowance**, a **mobility allowance**, a **family allowance** (only if applicable) and **long-term leave** and **special needs allowances** (only if applicable) in line with the [MSCA Financial Guide](#).

The doctoral programme comprises **two periods of secondment** as detailed in table 2, as well as a range of **network-wide training events and conferences**. Those form an integral part of the doctoral programme for each DC. All DCs must therefore be able and willing to travel to these training events and conferences and to complete two secondments.

2. Why choose EUFOG?

As a MSCA doctoral network, EUFOG: *Contested EU Foreign Policy in an Era of Geopolitics* has three main objectives: (1) to provide a **cutting-edge and world-class training**



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programme to doctoral candidates (DCs) to better understand the ways in which the EU is reconsidering key tenets of its international role in the face of the geopolitical turn in international politics; (2) **to foster scientific excellence and methodological innovation** on the EU's role as a geopolitical actor through an inter-disciplinary programme, the use of mixed methods, the decentering of EU foreign policy scholarship, and the co-production of research with key stakeholders; (3) **to engage in effective and mutually-beneficial knowledge exchange** with a diversity of stakeholders, including policy-, decision- and opinion-makers, and media (traditional and social), in the EU and beyond it.

A timely and exciting topic

The liberal international order is undergoing major transformations. Although the final destination of these changes is still to be seen, the situation is shaped by a return of competition between great powers in a multipolar world, facilitated further by growing geopolitical ambitions of the many regional powers. So far, this has not implied a general break-down of the order. The picture is much more diverse and it includes successful efforts to sustain the order in some areas, the mobilization of some of its norms or institutions for the purposes of competition over power, but also open contestation of those norms and attempts to establish rivaling orders, with different actors playing different roles in different policy areas. This is all on the background of the existential threats to humanity (climate change, pandemics, deteriorating environment, technological breakthroughs, AI) marking an ever-fierce competition for resources, and the pervasiveness of the new media ecology that has irrevocably changed the international relations landscape. Hence there is a need for in-depth knowledge that will ensure the EU and its Member States can effectively navigate international power shifts and contribute to more sustainable global governance.

EUFOG systematically addresses the **politics, policies and partners** associated with **the ways in which EU foreign policy responds to these new international realities**. Firstly, EUFOG is interested in understanding how politics shapes the EU's response to the fragmentation of the international order. Secondly, EUFOG will also examine different policies adopted by the



EU with the ambition to become a more geopolitical and geoeconomic actor. Finally, the network will also pay attention to the role and agency of partners – i.e. to the evolving relationships with and perspectives about the EU held by other key powers.

A unique opportunity

The EUFOG project will train **18 doctoral candidates (DCs)**. 15 DCs are funded by the **European Union (Horizon Europe MSCA Doctoral Networks)**, whilst 3 DCs are funded by the **UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Horizon Europe guarantee scheme**. You will be immersed in an **enriching and expert community** and will forge crucial relationships both in academic environments and in industry. The opportunity to work in three different academic/industry environments and **connect with peers** will prove invaluable for your career.

This project offers exciting opportunities for the selected candidates. Through the course of your PhD, you will be enrolled in a prestigious **local doctoral programme** hosted by a leading high education institution. Additionally, as part of EUFOG, you will enjoy **two secondment periods of 6 months** each in two leading research institutions, as well as access to various **specific network events** (e.g., training schools) and usual **academic practices** (e.g., international conferences) which you will attend through the course of your PhD. Furthermore, you will also **interact with stakeholders** in ways that inform the comprehensive construction of your research problems and the assessment of your findings vis-à-vis current debates.

Altogether, EUFOG presents a unique and invaluable opportunity for you to further your **academic career** and be an active member of a **vibrant research community** alongside your EUFOG-wide PhD cohort, allowing you to deepen ties with current and future leading researchers of EU Foreign Policy.

EUFOG is committed to developing and ensuring **equality and diversity** in our project by



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integrating sex, gender and intersectional analysis into research in order to contribute to gender-responsive policies. The network promotes a **gender-mainstreaming approach** through the inclusion of experts who specialize in gender studies, and the promotion of gender-sensitive guidelines in all steps of doctoral candidates' research process.

Exclusive benefits

As part of the EUFOG network you will be employed on **labour contracts** and will be registered at the local institution for doctoral degrees, entitling you to **pensions, social security contributions, and employment benefits** as well as **paid holidays**. EUFOG offers **flexible working hours** for women and men to facilitate childcare arrangements that are important for **life–work balance** and **gender equality**.

As part of your host institution's doctoral programme, you will enjoy **individual local training** including courses on general introduction to research design, methods, ethics, advanced research methods, and other courses on transferable and non-transferable skills. EUFOG will organize **network wide events**, which aim at enriching relationships among network members by providing a thriving environment where researchers can exchange ideas and engage with one another, all the while developing common understandings of the issues addressed in the project. These events include advanced courses, the EUFOG Winter School, and EUFOG conference. Additionally, once your PhD has been completed, you will have the opportunity to further develop your career and relationships in the context of the **EUFOG alumni network**.

Expert supervision in a multi-partner interdisciplinary network

EUFOG brings together **17 industry-academia partners** to provide high-level and interdisciplinary research and specialised training, including **research visits** and **secondments** at associated partners, to bridge the gap between **academic research** and **everyday policy practice**. This **gendered-balanced network** gathers scholar and non-scholar



experts, European and non-European, working on International Relations and European studies, economics (political economy and trade), gender studies, public diplomacy and communication, to provide a **diversity of inputs** to the eighteen doctoral projects of DCs, dismantle disciplinary silos and train DCs in a wide range of transferable skills.

EUFOG will mobilize and combine the conceptual and methodological knowledge of a network of researchers and institutions that is **interdisciplinary and open to a diversity of innovative methods** in the areas of political science, European/EU studies, political economy, international relations, communication, public diplomacy, media and gender studies. The aim is to provide you with state-of-the-art methodological tools to **analyse changes in EU foreign policy in a more geopolitical world**.

A key part of the training element of this network is the use of techniques and tools that cross the three dimensions that articulate the network –politics, policy and partners. This includes **mixed methods** (quantitative and qualitative), **decentering approaches**, and the **coproduction of research** across sectors, disciplines, national contexts, and stakeholders. Altogether, EUFOG embodies an **integrated, collaborative, frontier-of-science research project**. In order to foster truly collaborative research, as a doctoral candidate, you will be supervised by three supervisors (two academic and one professional).

EUFOG Academic partners

EUFOG is a multi-sectoral network led by an interdisciplinary team of **internationally recognised scholars**. All of them are tenured academics within their home institutions and have previously worked together and with access to cutting-edge research facilities.

Meet our team of experts with whom you will be working with:



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Table 1:

Lead expert	Recruiting organisation	Country
Dr. Oriol Costa (for applications: eufog@ibei.org)	Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals (IBEI) / Autonomous University of Barcelona	Spain
Dr. Magdalena Góra	Jagiellonian University Krakow (Institute of European Studies)	Poland
Dr. Karolina Pomorska	University of Leiden (Institute of Political Science)	Netherlands
Prof. Dr. Sven Biscop	Egmont - Institut Royal Des Relations Internationales / Ghent University	Belgium
Prof. Dr. Helene Sjursen	Oslo University (ARENA Centre for European Studies)	Norway
Prof. Dr. Patrick Müller	Vienna School of International Studies	Austria
Prof. Dr. Ana E. Juncos	University of Bristol (School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies)	United Kingdom

EUFOG Academic and non-academic associate partners

The EUFOG partners are **leaders in their field**. They regularly produce impactful analyses on the issues addressed in this network and shape debates that are relevant for them. As part of the EUFOG network, you will enjoy **two periods of secondment** during your PhD which will be **hosted by two of our partners**:

1. Prof. Dr. Natalia Chaban (Department of Media and Communication, University of Canterbury, New Zealand)
2. Prof. Dr. Katie Laatikainen (College of Arts and Sciences, Adelphi University, United States)
3. Dr. Renato Flôres Jr. (International Intelligence Unit, Fundação Getulio Vargas, Brazil)
4. Dr. Pol Morillas (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs, CIDOB, Spain)
5. Dr. Louise van Schaik (The Netherlands Institute of International Relations)



Clingendael, The Netherlands)

6. Dr. Luis Simón (Centre for Security, Diplomacy and Strategy, VUB, Belgium)
7. Dr. Kristi Raik (International Centre for Defence and Security, ICDS, Estonia)
8. Wojciech Przybylski (Visegrad Insight - Res Publica Foundation, Poland)

3. Open Positions and Projects

The international role of the EU is now contested and takes place in an international order that has turned geopolitical. This contradicts major assumptions in scholarship. EUFOG addresses **new theorization and research** by looking at the **politics, policies and partners (3Ps)** of EU foreign policy, and by integrating outside-in and inside-out perspectives. EUFOG doctoral projects will explore these aspects with regards to the 3Ps in various ways. Below you will find the 18 positions for Doctoral Candidates currently offered for the following 18 projects:

Table 2:

DC	PhD project title	Recruiting organisation /Host	Secondment 1 6M (September 2026 – February 2027)	Secondment 2 6M (September 2027 – February 2028)
1	The politics of defence. EU member states debate armed forces in an era of great power competition.	Egmont (PhD enrolment: UGhent) (Belgium)	ULEI (Netherlands) (ACADEMIC)	Visegrad Insight-Res Publica (Poland) (NON-ACADEMIC)
2	Driving contestation on climate and gender. Populism, the Commission, and the erosion of the liberal international order.	IBEI (PhD enrolment: UAB) (Spain)	ULEI (Netherlands) (ACADEMIC)	CIDOB (Spain) (NON-ACADEMIC)
3	The EU over 27. Enlargement in an era of great power competition.	ULEI ¹ (Netherlands)	UoB (UK) (ACADEMIC)	CSDS-BSoG-VUB (Belgium) (NON-ACADEMIC)
4	The (geo)politics of energy. EU	JUK (Poland)	UoB (UK)	Egmont (Belgium)

¹ The University of Leiden programme has a duration of 4 years.



	member states energy and raw materials diversification in the era of scarcity.		(ACADEMIC)	(NON-ACADEMIC)
5	How deep are changes to the international role of the EU? The cases of development policy and human rights.	UiO (Norway)	IBEI (Spain) (ACADEMIC)	Clingendael (Netherlands) (NON-ACADEMIC)
6	Gender in EU external relations in an age of closure, community and competition.	IBEI (PhD enrolment: UAB) (Spain)	UiO (Norway) (ACADEMIC)	Clingendael (Netherlands) (NON-ACADEMIC)
7	Global climate politics beyond contractual multilateralism. Reconsidering EU as a green power.	IBEI (PhD enrolment: UAB) (Spain)	Adelphi (USA) (ACADEMIC)	Clingendael (Netherlands) (NON-ACADEMIC)
8	From normative to pragmatic and back? The EU's engagement with close neighbours in a geopolitical order.	JUK (Poland)	DA (Austria) (ACADEMIC)	Visegrad Insight- Res Publica (Poland) (NON- ACADEMIC)
9	Is geopolitics the only game in town? The sources of Grand Strategic thought in the EU.	Egmont (PhD enrolment: UGhent) (Belgium)	UiO (Norway) (ACADEMIC)	ICDS (Estonia) (NON-ACADEMIC)
10	Atlanticists, Europeanists and strategic autonomy. Preferences over and by allies.	ULEI ² (Netherlands)	Adelphi (USA) (ACADEMIC)	Egmont (Belgium) (NON-ACADEMIC)
11	Going South. Changing perspectives on the EU among "friends of multilateralism".	UiO (Norway)	UCanterbury (New Zealand) (ACADEMIC)	FGV (Brazil) (NON- ACADEMIC)
12	Candidates, neighbours, buffers. Inclusion and exclusion in narratives about EU neighbouring regions.	JUK (Poland)	DA (Austria) (ACADEMIC)	ICDS (Estonia) (NON-ACADEMIC)
13	The EU's public diplomacy at time of crises and uncertainty. Cases on security and multilateralism.	DA (Austria)	UCanterbury (New Zealand) (ACADEMIC)	ICDS (Estonia) (NON-ACADEMIC)
14	The Western security alliance under stress. The place of the EU.	DA (Austria)	IBEI (Spain) (ACADEMIC)	CSDS-BSog-VUB (Belgium) (NON- ACADEMIC)
15	Great Powers and Multilateral Cooperation at the UN: Perceptions, Priorities and Outcomes.	DA (Austria)	IBEI (Spain) (ACADEMIC)	FGV (Brazil) (NON- ACADEMIC)
16	Clashing self-understandings of EU Strategic Autonomy in a context of	UoB (UK) ³	UiO (Norway)	ICDS (Estonia)

² The University of Leiden programme has a duration of 4 years.

³ All UK based projects are funded by UKRI.



	geopolitical competition.		(ACADEMIC)	(NON-ACADEMIC)
17	Domestic contestation over the EU's new geoeconomic instruments	UoB (UK)	IBEI (Spain) (ACADEMIC)	FGV (Brazil) (NON-ACADEMIC)
18	A new geoeconomic power? Assessing the impact of the EU's unilateral trade and investment policy instruments	UoB (UK)	DA (Austria) (ACADEMIC)	CIDOB (Spain) (NON-ACADEMIC)

4. Who Can Apply:

4.1. General EUFOG Eligibility Criteria

The positions are open to **excellent researchers of any nationality**, provided that they fulfill ALL the following criteria:

- (a) Applicants must **not** already be in possession of a doctoral degree at the date of the recruitment (i.e. the starting date indicated in the employment contract/equivalent direct contract). Researchers who have successfully defended their doctoral thesis but have not yet formally been awarded their doctoral degree will not be considered as doctoral candidates.
- (b) Applicants must comply with the **physical mobility rule**: in general, they must not have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in the country of the recruiting organisation for more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately before their recruitment date. All recruiting organisations are required to verify that fact. You will therefore be required to provide supporting documentation proving your place(s) of residence or work during the previous 3 years. **Please prepare all your documentation and be ready to submit it promptly should you be offered a position. Any offer of a position will be conditional upon receiving the documentation that proves your compliance with the mobility rule.** Relevant documents for that purpose include the following: residence certificates; certificates or confirmation letters from



an applicant’s place of work / study / training issued by the employer or organization concerned; receipts of tax payments indicating your official address; residential rental agreements; employment contracts; confirmation from a flat / house owner that you previously lived / are currently living at that address; utility bills indicating your name and address (e.g., water, gas, electricity).

(c) Applicants must meet all the **academic criteria** for admission to the doctoral programme of the university awarding the PhD degree. As the EUFOG doctoral programme is delivered in English, proficiency in the English language is a requirement for all DCs.

4.2 Specific requirements

Each host institution’s doctoral programme may have varying enrollment requirements. Please check the corresponding requirements of the programme which houses the project(s) you are applying for:

Table 3:

DC/project number	Host institution	Requirements & information
1, 9	Egmont / Ghent University	Enrolment doctorate (PhD)
2, 6, 7	IBEI / UAB	Politics, Policies and International Relations Programme - Admission
3, 10	Leiden University	PhD – Institute for Political Science * Vacancies – Leiden University
4, 8, 12	Jagiellonian University Krakow	Vacancies – Jagiellonian University Institute for European Studies - Careers
5, 11	Oslo University (ARENA)	Vacancies – Arena Centre for European Studies



13, 14, 15	Vienna School of International Studies	PhD in Interdisciplinary International Studies
16, 17, 18	University of Bristol	School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies - How to apply

*Please check the EUFOG website for more information on Leiden University's applications' requirements.

5. How to Apply: Application and Selection Process

All applicants are required to follow the same application process, which is in line with the principles set out in the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. This process is spelled out in the following manner:

5.1. Formal Application

In this first step, applicants are required to submit their application to the lead expert of their preferred project with the email subject 'EUFOG-DN-2025'. Please check the links provided in Table 1 for the contact information of each lead expert. **The deadline for submitting your formal application is March 1st, 2025 at 17:00 CET.**

In order to be processed, your application must include the following documents:

1. Completed EUFOG application form;
2. Cover letter (2 pages maximum): it should explain your motivations for applying for an EUFOG scholarship and present an overview of your academic background, including the concrete experience, knowledge, skills and attributes that make you a good fit for the position(s) for which you are applying;
3. Curriculum Vitae / Resume: it must clearly indicate your periods of education, qualifications achieved, work experience (if applicable), research experience (if applicable) and publications (if applicable);
4. Scanned copy of a valid ID (national ID or passport);
5. Scanned copies of your official academic transcripts: if those are not in English, they should be submitted together with a translation of these documents into English. If you have not yet been awarded your Master's degree, please submit a provisional

13



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- transcript of your marks;
6. Scanned copy of the certificate proving your English proficiency;
 7. A sample of academic writing (e.g., journal article, research paper, conference paper, Master's dissertation, etc.).
 8. **Any other specific documents or requirements of your prospective host institution. This will depend on the project for which you are applying. Please check these requirements in the links provided in table 3.**
 9. A **research proposal** on the project you have selected of a minimum of 5 pages. Please see Annex 1 for more information.

Applications submitted by that date will receive primary consideration. However, we will continue to consider applications received after that date until all positions are filled.

5.2. Selection Process

Applications that pass the eligibility checks will then be assessed by a Selection Panel comprising representatives of the recruiting organisations against the following evaluation criteria:

- (a) Quality of the project proposal as well as the proposal's fit within the selected PhD project;
- (b) Academic qualifications, including MA degree grades and the quality of submitted writing samples;
- (c) Personal suitability and motivation, including attitude towards working autonomously in an interdisciplinary and transnational environment and alignment between the applicant's career aspirations and their selected doctoral programme.

5.3. Interviews

Shortlisted candidates will be invited for an online interview. They will be notified by **March 28th, 2025**. Interviews are scheduled to take place starting on **March 31st, 2025**.



5.5. Recruitment

Once the interviews phase is finished, you will be contacted to inform you of the final decision. From then onwards, you will be directed to the formal recruitment process and timeline which will vary depending on your host institution and will be formalized locally. Your PhD will formally start on **September 1st, 2025**.

6. Data Protection

Please note that your personal data are only collected for the purpose of conducting the recruitment process for the EUFOG Doctoral Network. As part of this process, your personal data may be shared with the other recruiting organisations that are part of EUFOG. IBEI must comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) when it collects and uses your personal data. IBEI acts as a 'Data Controller' in respect of your personal data and complies with its responsibilities under these laws.

7. Further Enquiries

Any enquiries relating to these positions should be directed to the EUFOG Network Coordinator, Dr. Oriol Costa, Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals (Email: eufog@ibei.org).



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Annex 1 - How to write a PhD research proposal

Your research proposal is a statement (minimum of 5 pages) of the rationale for your research proposal, the research questions to be answered and how you propose to address them. A research proposal is not set in stone, you will refine and amend your approach and methodology in the early stages of your PhD. However, we want to see that you can construct a fairly rigorous, high quality research proposal, which will be assessed based on its quality, originality, and coherence.

Format of the research proposal. Your proposal should include the following:

Title. A short, indicative title is best.

Abstract. This is a succinct summary of your research proposal (approximately 200-300 words) that will present a condensed outline, enabling the reader to get a very quick overview of your proposed project, lines of inquiry and possible outcomes. An abstract is often written last, after you have written the proposal and are able to summarise it effectively.

Rationale for the research project. This might include a description of the question/debate/phenomenon of interest (see Table 2); an explanation of why the topic is of interest to you; and an outline of the reasons why the topic should be of interest to research and/ or practice (the 'so what?' question).

Aims and initial research question. What are the aims and objectives of the research? State clearly the puzzle you are addressing, and the research question that you intend to pursue. It is acceptable to have multiple research questions, but it is a good idea to clarify which is the main research question. If you have hypotheses, discuss them here. A research proposal can and should make a positive and persuasive first impression and demonstrate your potential to become a good researcher. In particular, you need to demonstrate that you can



think critically and analytically as well as communicate your ideas clearly.

Research context for your proposed project. Provide a short introduction to your selected project (see table 2) with a succinct, selective and critical review of the relevant literature. Demonstrate that you understand the theoretical underpinnings and main debates and issues in your research area and how your proposed research will make an original and necessary contribution to this. You need to demonstrate how your proposed research will fill a gap in existing knowledge.

Intended methodology. Outline how you plan to conduct the research and the data sources that you will use. We do not expect you to have planned a very detailed methodology at this stage, but you need to provide an overview of how you will conduct your research (qualitative and/or quantitative methods) and why this methodology is suited for your proposed study. You need to be convincing about the appropriateness and feasibility of the approaches you are suggesting, and reflective about problems you might encounter (including ethical and data protection issues) in collecting and analysing your data.

Expected outcomes and impact. How do you think the research might add to existing knowledge; what might it enable organisations or interested parties to do differently? Consider how your research might contribute to both academic impact and/or economic and societal impact.

Timetable. What is your initial estimation of the timetable of the dissertation? When will each of the key stages start and finish (refining proposal; literature review; developing research methods; fieldwork; analysis; writing the draft; final submission). There are likely to be overlaps between the stages. Take into consideration the duration of the EUFOG PhD scholarships as well as the planned secondments (see Table 2).

Bibliography. Do make sure that you cite what you see as the key readings in the field. This does not have to be comprehensive but you are illustrating the range of sources you might



use in your research.

Checklist

We expect your research proposal to be clear, concise and grammatically correct. Prior to submitting your research proposal, please make sure that you have addressed the following issues:

- Have you included a clear summary of what the proposed research is about and why it is significant?
- Have you clearly identified what your proposed research will add to our understanding of theory, knowledge or research design?
- Does it state what contributions it will make to policy and/or practice?
- Does the proposal clearly explain how you will do the research?
- Is the language clear and easy to understand by someone who is not an expert in the field?
- Is the grammar and spelling correct?