



Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions European Postdoctoral Fellowship: Call for Expression of Interest: **Deadline: 17 March 2025**

The Human Rights Centre, based at Essex Law School at the University of Essex, is now launching a call for Expression of Interest to apply for the MSCA European Postdoctoral Fellowships. This highly regarded fellowship gives candidates the opportunity to pursue a two-year research project under the supervision of an experienced academic within the field.

Eligible candidates must hold a PhD, have a maximum of 8 years of research experience from the time their PhD was awarded, and cannot have lived or worked in the UK for 12 months or more over the past three years. Additional details of the eligibility rules are provided below.

About the [Essex Human Rights Centre](#)

The Human Rights Centre (HRC) is a flagship interdisciplinary centre based at Essex Law School (ELS). It encompasses the most extensive and comprehensive concentration of human rights experts globally with 100+ committed members with expertise and active research projects straddling all areas of human rights protection and involving multiple disciplines and approaches. It boasts a global reputation for excellence in the delivery of world-leading interdisciplinary educational programmes, the promotion of human rights research rated as internationally excellent, and in the engagement in the practice of human rights with partners and other collaborators from the local to the global.

The Human Rights Centre's mission is to be a world-class centre of excellence that produces ground-breaking and transformational research, knowledge and technical expertise on pressing human rights challenges; initiates world-class and accessible educational programmes and learning opportunities to imbue the next generation of scholars, human rights advocates and change-makers with practical skills and knowledge, and fosters impactful partnerships with practitioners from grassroots advocates to global policy-leaders.

Key research strengths include:

*The high concentration of academics and scholars who hold pivotal roles in the practice of human rights, with international and regional organisations, with deep connections to civil society, as advisors to governments and specialist courts and tribunals.

*Award-winning programmes of research in crucial areas such as artificial intelligence and online safety; the promotion of economic, social and cultural rights; the rights of indigenous peoples; armed conflict and civilian harm reduction; business and human rights; the right to health; the rights of persons with disabilities; transitional justice; environmental protection and human rights and international criminal law.

*Deep cross-disciplinary connections in areas such as **the right to health** (health and social care, public health, philosophy, law), **responses to the climate emergency** (sociology, law, business administration, health and social care), **armed conflict** (law, government, sociology, journalism), **artificial intelligence** (computer science and data analytics, law, sociology,

philosophy), and **transitional justice** (law, sociology and anthropology, government, art history and heritage, literature, theatre and film studies).

*An established Human Rights Centre Doctoral Affiliates Network, Human Rights Research Cluster and several thematic clusters where doctoral candidates, early career and established academics present work-in-progress and discuss cross-cutting themes. The Human Rights Centre also boasts an active seminar and events series featuring talks on some of the most pressing human rights challenges.

We are looking to support a small number of high-quality MSCA European Postdoctoral Fellowship applications in the following areas of specialisation:

i) ***Human rights for all:*** This is research aimed at identifying, theorising, and developing strategies to combat the double standards which result in certain individuals and groups' human rights being impeded or denied and with unequal access to justice to redress those imbalances, particularly for economic, social and cultural rights. This research area will consider how to overcome barriers to justice fostered by positional hierarchies, discrimination, marginalisation, and other vulnerabilities. This focus will also interrogate the inherent weaknesses and limitations of human rights frameworks to address power differentials and their colonial implications.

ii) ***Future-proofing human rights:*** This is research aimed at addressing new challenges for human rights in three main areas: **new technologies; climate change and the environment** and the **rights of nature and animal rights**.

iii) ***Interrogating under-regulated spaces:*** This is research which focuses on the zones of exception in human rights regulation and accountability. It considers the growing tendencies for States and non-state actors to operate extraterritorially where governance and oversight structures are weakest, and the tendency of certain States to outsource human rights obligations to private actors or third States particularly in the areas of migration control and administrative detention. This thematic focus also considers the challenges to address the growing influence of multinational corporations, non-state armed groups and organised crime networks and their impact on human rights protections.

iv) ***Promoting people-centred and people-driven approaches:*** This is research aimed at interrogating the changing spectrum of human rights activism. It will also interrogate shifting notions of solidarity and the right to express solidarity in respect of migrants, victims of human rights abuses and conflict-related crimes and other excluded or marginalised persons and groups through the lenses of media freedom, freedom of expression, assembly and association, academic freedom and the obligation to protect and promote civil society space.

Description of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral European Fellowship

The purpose of the MSCA European Postdoctoral Fellowship is to support the career development and training of researchers through international mobility. The scheme is open to researchers of any nationality who wish to engage in R&I projects by either coming to Europe from any country in the world or moving within Europe. The standard duration of these fellowships must be between 12 and 24 months.

The grant provides researchers with a salary, a mobility allowance, family allowance (if required) as well as funding for research, training and networking. Full details of the scheme are available

at <https://marie-sklodowska-curie-actions.ec.europa.eu/calls/msca-postdoctoral-fellowships-2025>

Eligibility and Candidate qualifications

- Candidates should hold a PhD degree on the closing date for applications which has a clear connection to the theory or practice of human rights. Applicants who have successfully defended their doctoral thesis but who have not yet formally been awarded the doctoral degree are also eligible to apply.
- Have a maximum of eight years of experience in research from the date of the award of the PhD degree – the following experience will not be counted towards this maximum to Europe:
 - years of experience outside research and career breaks
 - years of experience in research in third countries, for nationals or long-term residents of EU Member States or Horizon Europe Countries who wish to reintegrate
- comply with mobility rules: At the time of the call deadline (10 September 2025) researchers must **not** have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies etc) in the UK for more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately before the call deadline.
- Candidates are also expected to have good problem solving, troubleshooting, and analytical skills, be fluent in written and spoken English, have good interpersonal and communication skills, and be able to work independently as well as within an international team.

Application process

Interested applicants should submit:

- a one-page CV; and
- an outline of the proposed research (maximum 1,500 words)

The outline of the proposed research must include a brief description of:

- The purpose of the project, including the hypothesis or central research questions that the project seeks to test/answer;
- Why it is important to undertake this research, including how the project contributes to the state-of-the art;
- What research methodology and approach will be used;
- Why the Human Rights Centre is an appropriate host institution; and how it connects with one of the areas of specialisation;
- To list any contacts they have had, if any, with academics associated with the Human Rights Centre in connection with this proposal. Candidates are encouraged to indicate if there are particular members of staff they would prefer to work with.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss your proposal further, please contact Professor Carla Ferstman via humanrightscentre@essex.ac.uk.

Deadline: Please submit your application in Word by **17 March 2025** to humanrightscentre@essex.ac.uk.

Assessment process

- Review of expressions of interest will start immediately after the deadline.
- Proposals will be evaluated based on the applicant's qualifications and the outline of the proposed research, including its fit with the Human Rights Centre's priority areas of specialisation, as set out above.
- Based on the application and interview as relevant, candidates will be notified of the outcome of their applications by **28 March 2025**.

Those who are successful will be invited to develop a full MSCA PF application in collaboration with the Human Rights Centre and with the support of the Research and Enterprise Teams at the University of Essex. The final proposal must be submitted by the deadline of **10 September 2025**.

Please note:

- An expression of interest is not a promise of funding or position. It is an expression of interest in making a future application with the University of Essex as your host.
- All documents that you submit to the University of Essex, including your proposal, will be handled in full confidentiality and in strict compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018).

Our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- At Essex our people are at the centre of everything we do and we aspire to build a culture in which every member of the University feels valued and can flourish.
- We are committed to equality of opportunity, to being fair and inclusive. We therefore particularly encourage applications from candidates who are likely to be underrepresented in our workforce.
- These include people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds; disabled people and LGBTQ+ people and from women in our grades 9-11 roles.
- The [diversity of our community](#) is more than where our staff and students come from. More than 1000 of our staff and students identify as LGBTQ+, more than 1,300 have declared a disability and many members of our community follow a religion or belief.
- You can read more about our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion [here](#).
- Our [Strategy](#) sets out how we will do this through the delivery of a fair and supportive working environment for all.
- The University of Essex is proud to be part of the Disability Confident scheme and is committed to supporting diversity and equality, representative of our inclusive community. As part of our commitment to this scheme any candidate who has a disability and meets all the essential criteria for the role will be offered an interview. We also work in partnership with national disability organisation [AccessAble](#) who provide detailed online access guides to many of our campus buildings and facilities which you may find useful.”

The postdoctoral position (if the MSCA-PF application is successful)

The successful MSCA European Postdoctoral fellowship will be announced by the EU in February 2026. To successful applicants who are awarded the MSCA European PF:

- Applicants who are successful in receiving EU funding must relocate to the University of Essex to work as a postdoctoral fellow to implement the project on a temporary contract.
- The successful candidates will have the possibility to pursue his/her academic goals with guidance from an experienced supervisor.
- Membership in active research groups and joint academic seminars and discussion groups.
- Specialised training as agreed in the proposal.
- Opportunity to collaborate with talented people and network extensively.

Indicative Timeline

- 9 April 2025: Launch of the calls for proposal
- 10 September 2025: Deadline for submitting proposals
- February 2026: Grant Agreement and signature for successful projects (TBC)
- April 2026: First EU-funded projects start (TBC)