

NOVEL MSCA Postdoctoral Programme: Webinar for Applicants

12.2.2025

*Webpage: uef.fi/novel
Contact us at novel@uef.fi
LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube:
[@NOVEL MSCA Postdoctoral Programme](#)*



**Co-funded by
the European Union**



Programme

Introduction to NOVEL MSCA Postdoctoral Programme, NOVEL Coordinator Prof. Tarja Malm

Research opportunities we offer, NOVEL Coordinator Prof. Tarja Malm & Co-coordinator Prof. Päivi Eriksson

Application Process, NOVEL Co-coordinator Prof. Päivi Eriksson

Q&A, moderated by NOVEL Impact Manager Dr. Piritta Parkkari



Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA)

- The European Union's flagship funding programme for doctoral education and postdoctoral training of researchers, part of [Horizon Europe Programme](#).
- MSCA fund excellent research and innovation and equip researchers at all stages of their career with new knowledge and skills, through mobility across borders and exposure to different sectors and disciplines.
- MSCA COFUND Postdoctoral Programmes fund individual advanced research training and career development fellowships for postdoctoral researchers.
- MSCA COFUND: EU Contributes majority of salary costs, beneficiary contributes the rest.
- UEF is currently running [Neuro-Innovation, a MSCA COFUND PhD Programme](#).



Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) principles

Excellence

Mobility

*Bottom-up and
open to the world*

*Excellent
recruitment,
working conditions
and inclusiveness*

*Effective
supervision and
career guidance*

*Open science and
responsible
research and
innovation*

*European Green
Deal*

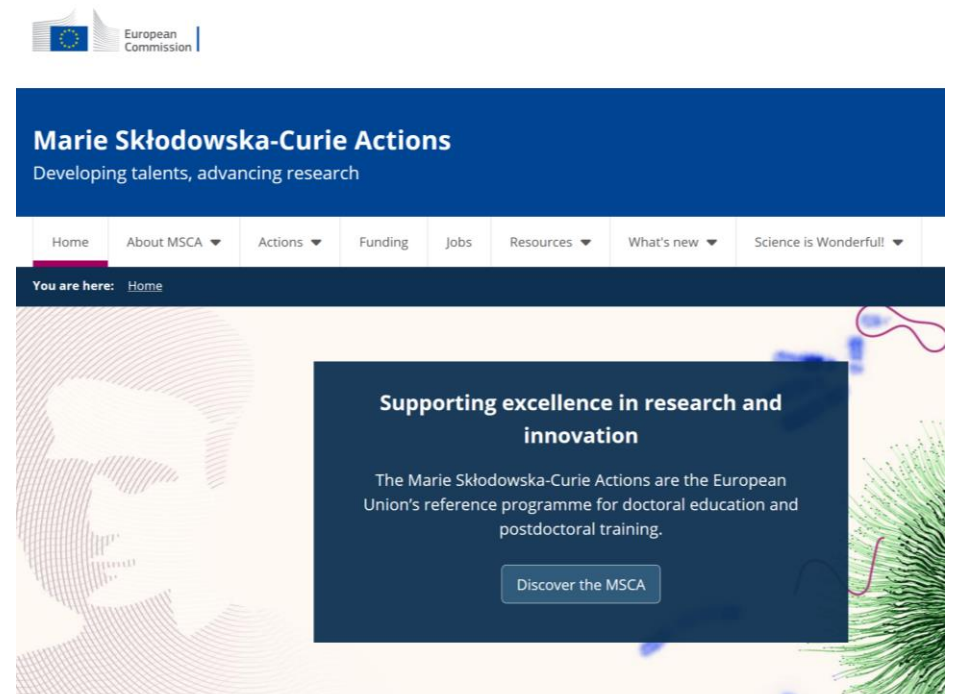
Synergies



Researchers involved in COFUND projects

- can be of any nationality
- should comply with the mobility rules: they must not have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in the country of the recruiting organisation or implementing partner for more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately before the deadline of the co-funded programme's call
- can go on short term secondments
- for COFUND Postdoctoral Programmes: must have a doctoral degree and should not already be permanently employed by the organisation hosting them

<https://marie-sklodowska-curie-actions.ec.europa.eu/actions/cofund>



Introduction to NOVEL MSCA Postdoctoral Programme

NOVEL Coordinator Prof. Tarja Malm



Novel brain health solutions across four focus areas: Prevention and Care, Methods and Data, Innovation and Society, and Ethics and Well-being (NOVEL)

Call: HORIZON-MSCA-2023-COFUND-01-01 — MSCA COFUND 2023 SEP-211011553 NOVEL – Postdoctoral (Marie Skłodowska-Curie Co-funding)

Project ID : 101179145

Beneficiary: University of Eastern Finland (UEF).NEURO Research Community. Faculties: Faculty of Health; Faculty of Science, Forestry and Technology; Faculty of Social Sciences and Business Studies

Coordinator: Tarja Malm,
UEF A.I.Virtanen Institute

Co-coordinator: Päivi Eriksson,
UEF Business School

Programme Manager: Paula Inkeroinen,
Research services

Impact Manager: Piritta Parkkari,
UEF Business School



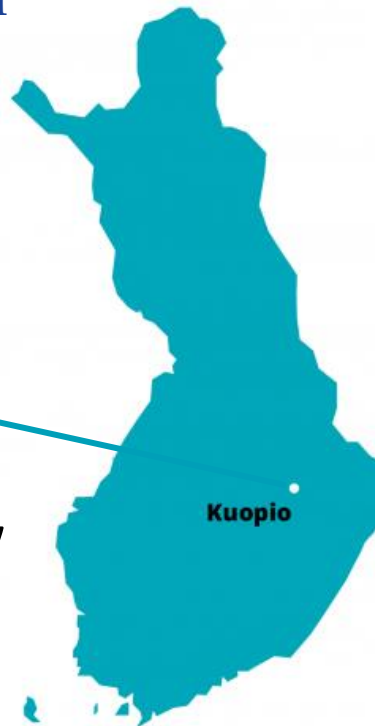
NOVEL MSCA Postdoctoral Programme – WHY?

- The world needs novel solutions to address brain health challenges that impact individuals and society.
- Research is needed to support early prediction, personalized treatments, advancements in methods and technologies, and the development of responsible innovation and ethical approaches.
- To address this, NOVEL focuses on pioneering research in brain health. We combine expertise in **neuroscience, data science, innovation management, health economics, and legal studies.**
- UEF has world class resources for research in these fields, inc. unique data sets and broad infrastructure
- Typically, postdocs in the EU do not have a steady job, research autonomy or career development support



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**Novel brain health solutions across
four focus areas: Prevention and Care,
Methods and Data, Innovation and
Society, and Ethics and Well-being**



CALL 1 MARCH 1 2025 – MAY 31 2025

CALL 2 DEC 1 2025 – FEB 28 2026

The University of Eastern Finland, UEF, is one of the largest multidisciplinary universities in Finland. We offer education in nearly one hundred major subjects, and we are home to approximately 15,500 students and 2,700 members of staff. In the international rankings, we are ranked among the leading universities in the world www.uef.fi/en

NOVEL  **MSCA**
POSTDOCTORAL PROGRAMME

14

fully paid postdoctoral positions

3

years

23

supervisors

9

university
partners

25

intersectoral
partners

Follow us!

uef.fi/novel



Secondments and visits

- **A compulsory intersectoral secondment** (lasting 2-6 months) with our partners that include e.g. ecosystems, companies, hospitals/healthcare organizations and patient advocacy organizations. See all our partners on our website uef.fi/novel. NOVEL coordinates these secondments. Can be on-site, remote or hybrid mode.
- **Additional optional secondments** (2–6 months): a) an extension of the cross-sectoral secondment in the same organization or in a new one, b) academic secondment to another university or research institution in Finland or abroad, or c) interdisciplinary internal secondment to another than their primary hosting research group within UEF.
- **Short visits** (1-4 weeks): learning professional, collaborative, entrepreneurial and business skills and building international, national, and regional networks with academics and stakeholders.
 - During secondments and short visits, researchers will work on their research project under the supervision of a co-supervisor from the hosting organization, benefit from knowledge and networks, and utilise their infrastructure.



Support for research & career development

- Our programme prepares postdoctoral researchers for diverse career paths in the modern health industry by providing tailored training and support.
- **Each researcher will be assigned a supervisor, co-supervisor, a secondment supervisor, and a mentor.**
- Each researcher will be part of the NOVEL community, a host research group, UEF's Neuroscience Research Community, and UEF.
- Each researcher creates **a personalized career development plan**, tailored to their background and needs, with ongoing guidance and regular updates.





NOVEL's training aims to

- Empower postdocs to lead their own impactful brain health projects and showcase achievements nationally and internationally to elevate their profiles
- Foster interdisciplinary and intersectoral collaboration and strengthen networks
- Enhance skills in leadership, ethics, communication, and innovation while promoting scientific integrity, interdisciplinary teamwork, and engagement with industry, policy, and the public.
- Support high-quality, open access publishing, commercialization, and expertise in supervision and teaching.





Customised training activities

1. Disciplinary Skills Development:

- Leading one's own innovative, interdisciplinary research project
- Personalised career development plans & individual training portfolio
- Training at UEF and during secondments

2. Transferable Skills:

- Training in entrepreneurship, commercialisation, ethics, leadership, open science, and innovation management and more

3. Stakeholder Engagement:

- Skills in public engagement, policymaking, dissemination, communication, patient advocacy, and networking



Customised training activities

Regular NOVEL Workshops: Covering research presentations, partner interactions, career coaching, and updating career and dissemination plans.

Strategic and Operative Project Management Coaching (Summer School): Project planning, data management, interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral integration, and communication skills.

Social Lab with Stakeholders Summer School: Skills for collaborating with multiple stakeholders, creating impactful, future-oriented solutions, and achieving social impact.

Empowering Team Leadership Summer School: Fostering leadership and teamwork skills, with a focus on diversity, equality, and inclusivity.

IPR and Commercialisation Workshop: Training in intellectual property management, patenting, and entrepreneurial strategies.

NOVEL Symposium: A platform to present brain health research and innovation.



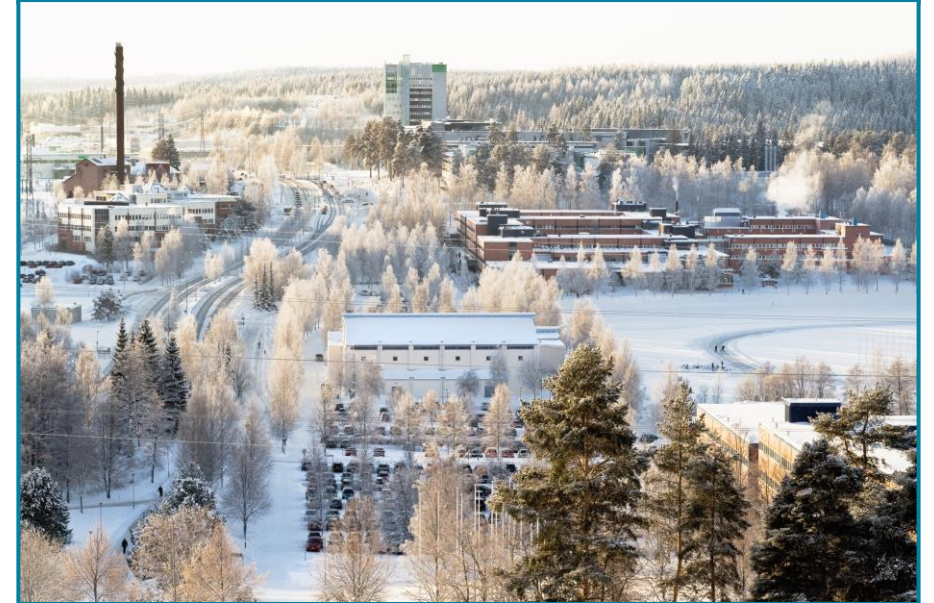
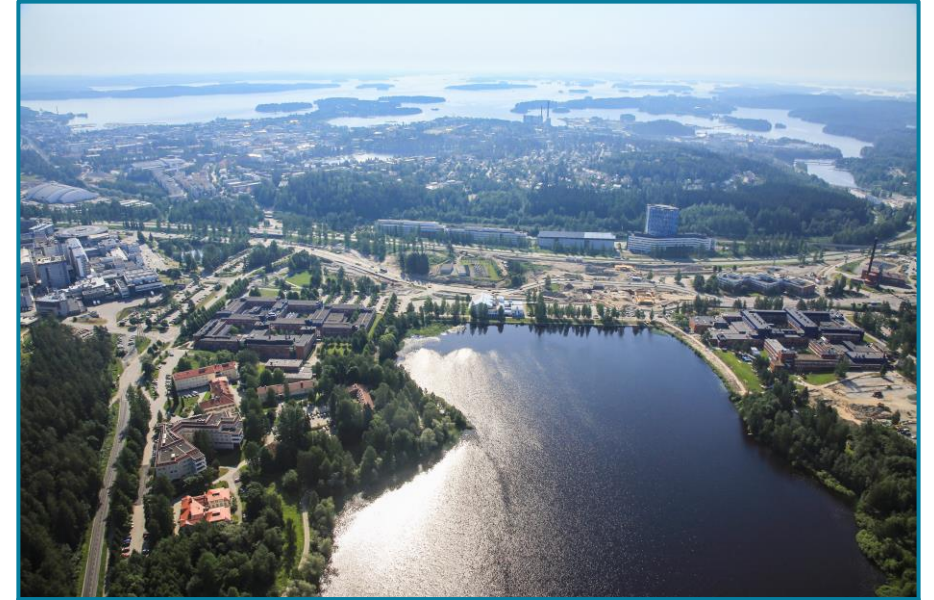
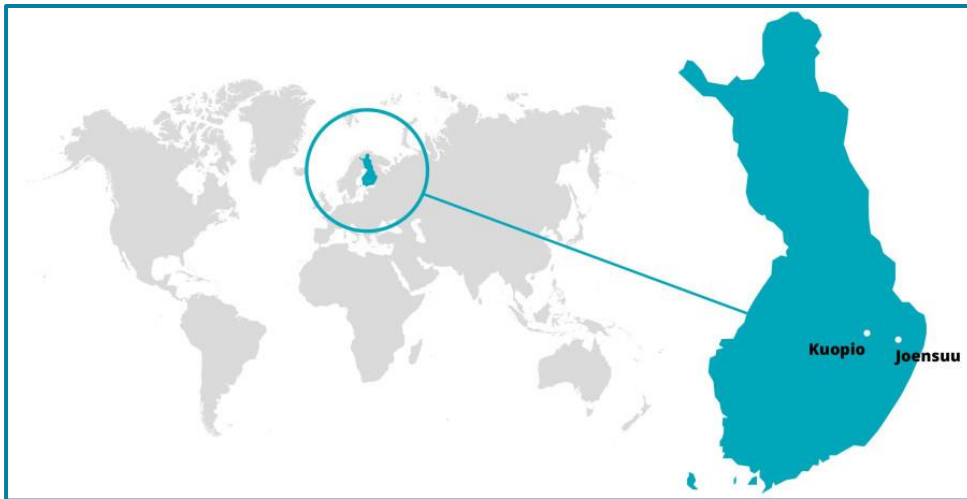
Requirements during the programme

- ✓ Full-time dedication (1,612 hours per year) – work done in Kuopio, Finland
- ✓ An intersectoral secondment (2-6 months) in a partner organisation
- ✓ Participation in NOVEL's events and training
- ✓ Create and maintain a Personal Career Development Plan
- ✓ Create and maintain a Data Management Plan
- ✓ Open Science
- ✓ Communicate & disseminate to scientific and wider audiences
- ✓ Compliance with UEF policies and with local law



Important remarks

- Please note that recruited researchers must reside and work in Kuopio, Finland!
- Kuopio is located in Eastern Finland and has about 120 000 inhabitants





So why choose NOVEL?

- ✓ Lead your own research project at an early career stage!
- ✓ Full funding for 3 years, competitive salary (3980 € before taxes), support for travel & secondments (up to 4500 € per year), family and special needs allowances available
- ✓ MSCA-accredited positions: globally renowned, prestigious reputation
- ✓ Support for interdisciplinary and intersectoral concepts
- ✓ Intersectoral exposure through a secondment
- ✓ Tailored training to further your skills and career
- ✓ Increased internationalization of your research profile
- ✓ UEF is a hotbed for interdisciplinary research. Kuopio has a highly quality university hospital. We have strong collaborations within the university and beyond it. Kuopio is a leading hub for brain health research in Finland.
- ✓ Finland is World's Happiest Country – excellent support for family & life balance

Research opportunities we offer

NOVEL Coordinator Prof. Tarja Malm & Co-coordinator Prof. Päivi Eriksson



YOU decide and design your research idea

- Research should be related to brain health and at least one of NOVEL's research areas (Prevention & Care; Data & Methods; Innovation in Society; Ethics & Wellbeing)
- The research should
 - Be interdisciplinary
 - include intersectoral mobility
 - collaborate with stakeholders who will assist in generating increased impact
 - plan for innovation and/or translational medicine approaches that have clinical and/or societal impact
 - exploit the cutting-edge infrastructure and databases available at the UEF
- ✓ NOTE: Must comply with UEF policies (including those on research ethics) and with local law



Research areas

Prevention and Care	SYSTEMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Neuroscience: basic & clinicalNeurodegenerative diseases and epilepsyEnvironmental health effectsBiomarkers and early diagnosis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Mental healthPublic health and dementiaLifestyleDisease mechanisms	CALL 1 Open for these areas: 1.3.2025-31.5.2025 9 positions open
Methods and Data	METHODS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Neuro-computingMultiscale ImagingPatient cohorts and clinical trialsPopulation-based trials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Human-based modelsAlgorithmsData protection and privacyData sharing	
Innovation in Society	IMPACT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Open innovationStakeholder engagement and collaborationCollaboration in global networksInnovation leadership and management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Social economy and social enterprisesInnovation activism and social marketingScience, innovation, and health diplomacyHealth economics	CALL 2 Open for these areas: 1.11.2025-31.1.2026 5 positions open
Ethics and Wellbeing	CONTEXT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Patient rightsAccess to justiceNeuro-ethicsLaw and society	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Elderly lawElderly citizens and patientsVulnerable groupsPatient and caregiver engagement	



Call 1: Prevention and Care; Methods and Data

- **Multifactorial Insights:** Explores how genetics, environmental, and lifestyle factors collectively contribute to brain diseases.
- **Integrated Analytics:** Uses large multiomic datasets, imaging, and advanced data analytics to uncover disease mechanisms, risk and to identify novel biomarkers.
- **Human-Based Models:** Uses human brain tissue samples and develops human-based disease models using iPSC technologies
- **Bridging Research:** Employs electrophysiology, single-cell technologies, and omics approaches to translate preclinical findings into clinical applications.
- **Advanced Diagnostics:** Utilizes omics analyses, deep phenotyping, and AI-approaches to develop personalized diagnostic and prognostic tools.
- **Preventive and Therapeutic Impact:** Aims to support better lifestyle choices, identify therapeutic targets, reduce healthcare costs, and inform regulatory measures



Call 2: Innovation in Society; Ethics & Wellbeing

- The research explores **how brain health is understood and shaped** within society, focusing on innovation, health, economics, ethics, and wellbeing.
- It examines how **social, economic and legal forces support or challenge** brain health and related innovation, and how provision of services, policies, and technologies emerge and interact with everyday life.
- It considers how socio-economic realities affect **access to** innovation, legal rights, and participation in the context of brain health.
- **Public and Patient Involvement** is central to understanding how individuals, communities and the public engage with brain health and related innovation.
- Through **interviews, surveys, registry data, and participatory research**, the research creates knowledge that connects scientific advancements with lived experiences.



Available host research groups, call 1

> **Molecular Genetics of Alzheimer's Disease - Hiltunen Lab**

> **Molecular Neurodegeneration Research Group (Haapasalo Lab)**

> **Multiscale Imaging Group (Sierra Lab)**

> **Neurobiology of Memory (Tanila Lab)**

> **Neuroinflammation Research Group (Malm Lab)**

> **NPH and Early AD**

> **UEF - Nordic-UK Brain Network (UEF-NBN)**

> **AIVI Stem Cell Center**

> **Algorithmic Data Analysis**

> **Biomedical Image Analysis**

> **Biomedical MRI**

> **Cellular Neurobiology (Kanninen Lab)**

> **Clinical Epilepsy Research**

> **Frontotemporal Lobar Degeneration and Early Onset Dementia**

> **Human Brain Disease Modelling Group**



Available host research groups, call 2

> **Health Economics Research Group**

> **Neuro-Ethics and Law Research Team**

> **NOVA Neuro-Innovation and Impact Research Team**

Application process

NOVEL Co-coordinator Prof. Päivi Eriksson



CALL SCHEDULES

CALL 1:

Call opens on March 1, 2025. Call deadline: May 31, 2025 at 16:00 (UTC+2/Helsinki). 9 positions open.

We will inform about the results of the selection process by November 10, 2025.

Selected researchers expected to start working between early December, 2025, and February 28, 2026.

CALL 2

Call opens on November 1, 2025. Call deadline: January 31, 2026 at 16:00 (UTC+2/Helsinki). 9 positions open.

We will inform about the results of the selection process by early July, 2026.

Selected researchers expected to start working between early August, 2026, and November 30, 2026.



How to apply

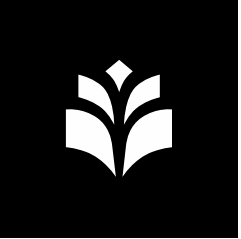




1. Check the eligibility criteria

Candidates must fulfil the following criteria to be eligible to apply:

- hold a PhD degree (or equivalent, incl. a research-based thesis) by the end of the closing of the call.
- have less than 7 years of research experience.
- fulfil the mobility requirement of the MSCA actions: at the time of the call deadline, the applicant must **not** have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies) in the country of their host organization (Finland) for more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately before the **call deadline**.
 - Applicants can be of any nationality, returning residents of Finland are eligible too!
- **possess at least one Letter of Support from a host research group at UEF**



2. Get to know the research areas and available host research groups

- Familiarize yourself with the research areas and the research groups: <https://sites.uef.fi/novel/research/>
- Identify a research group that fits your research idea.
- NOTE: You decide and design your own research idea.

Prevention and Care	SYSTEMS <ul style="list-style-type: none">Neuroscience: basic & clinicalNeurodegenerative diseases and epilepsyEnvironmental health effectsBiomarkers and early diagnosis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Mental healthPublic health and dementiaLifestyleDisease mechanisms	CALL 1 OPEN FOR THESE TWO AREAS 1.3.2025-31.5.2025 Positions for 9 PFs, appointment procedure 1.11.2025-31.2.2026
Methods and Data	METHODS <ul style="list-style-type: none">Neuro-computingMultiscale ImagingPatient cohorts and clinical trialsPopulation-based trials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Human-based modelsAlgorithmsData protection and privacyData sharing	
Innovation in Society	IMPACT <ul style="list-style-type: none">Open innovationStakeholder engagement and collaborationCollaboration in global networksInnovation leadership and management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Social economy and social enterprisesInnovation activism and social marketingScience, innovation, and health diplomacyHealth economics	CALL 2 OPEN FOR THESE TWO AREAS 1.11.2025-31.1.2026 Positions for 5 PFs, appointment procedure 1.8.2026-30.11.2026
Ethics and Wellbeing	CONTEXT <ul style="list-style-type: none">Patient rightsAccess to justiceNeuro-ethicsLaw and society	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Elderly lawElderly citizens and patientsVulnerable groupsPatient and caregiver engagement	



3. Contact a supervisor, discuss technical fit, and ask for a Letter of Support

- Contact one of the preferred supervisors as early as possible to discuss the technical fit of your research idea with the competence and infrastructure of the hosting research group (incl. major equipment, lab resources, availability or possibility to access required data, and supervisory expertise).
- List of supervisors to contact: <https://sites.uef.fi/novel/our-supervisors/>
 - Send an email, discuss your research idea, request a letter of support
 - Use template for the Letter of Support from <https://sites.uef.fi/novel/how-to-apply/>
- If an appropriate technical fit exists, ask for a Letter of Support.
 - NOTE! The supervisor can refuse to give a Letter of Support, if there is no technical fit with your project. Receiving a Letter of Support does **not** guarantee you will be chosen for the position: it is just a requirement to be eligible to apply!
 - The received Letter of Support is attached to the application in the online application system.



4. Prepare your required application documents

Use NOVEL templates - applications that don't use the templates are not eligible!

- After you have received a Letter of Support, start writing your **research proposal** *independently*. Max. 8 pages, must use template provided.
- Research proposal needs to contribute to at least one research area of the NOVEL programme, and interdisciplinary and intersectoral proposals are strongly encouraged.



4. Prepare your required application documents

Use NOVEL templates - applications that don't use the templates are not eligible!

All the documents needed for the application:

1. At least one signed Letter of Support from a supervisor indicating technical fit of the proposal with the hosting research group. Use NOVEL template!
2. Research proposal (maximum 8 pages). Use NOVEL template!
3. Summary of the research proposal (one page)
4. CV. Use NOVEL template!
 - The CV includes 10 most important publications. You can attach a separate list of publications in addition, if needed. The information on the length of your research experience must be visible in the CV.
5. Certified copy of the PhD degree diploma (or other certified proof if diploma not received yet).
6. Ethical Declaration and Ethical Self-assessment including infrastructure table. Use NOVEL template!
7. Preliminary Data Management Plan (one page). Follow NOVEL's instructions
8. Proof of English language proficiency may be asked if it is not indicated in the academic degrees or diplomas, that is if the applicant has not completed any academic degrees in university programmes taught in English.



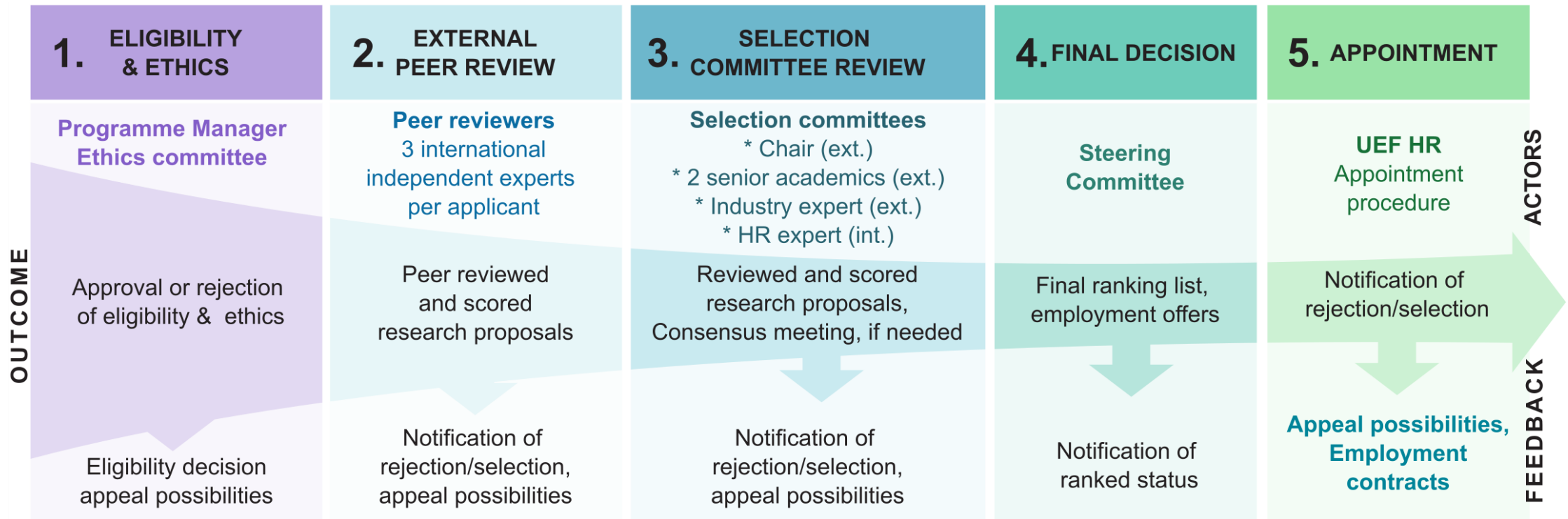
5. Submit your application

**Deadline for Call 1:
May 31, 2025 at 16:00
(UTC +2/Helsinki)**

- Applications are submitted via University of Eastern Finland's electronic application system Varbi **with** required documents attached. Link available on uef.fi/novel.
- To avoid any potential technical problems in your application submission, please submit the application well in advance.
 - You can modify your application after submission until the application period ends.
- Applications sent after the application deadline or changes made to applications after the application deadline will not be considered.
- NOTE: an applicant can submit only one application per call (if one submits multiple, the application submitted first will be acknowledged).



Selection process





TIMELINE

Activity	Duration
Call open	3 months
Eligibility and ethics check	1 week
Resolving appeals	1 week
Assigning external evaluators	1 month
External evaluation	1 month
Resolving appeals	1 week
Selection Committee review	3 weeks
Resolving appeals	1 week
Ranking list and final decision	1 week
Acceptance of positions	2 weeks
Signing work contracts and starting to work	1 week

Notification & potential appeals (5 days)

Notification & potential appeals (5 days)

Notification & potential appeals (5 days)



Evaluation criteria for external peer review

Table 1. Evaluation criteria for the applicants and their research proposals

SCORING	EXCELLENCE OF	FOCUS OF ASSESSEMENT IN EACH EVALUATION CATEGORY
6 = Outstanding (novelty and innovation at global level) 5 = Excellent (extremely good in international comparison) 4 = Very good (only minor elements to be improved) 3 = Good (some elements need improvement) 2 = Satisfactory (substantial improvement needed) 1 = Poor (includes severe intrinsic weaknesses)	APPLICANT	Quality of applicant at international level (considering career stage and plans). Record of scient. publications, teaching, supervision, innovation, dissemination. International networks, collaboration, awards, grants, technical competency.
	RESEARCH PROJECT	Quality and credibility of proposed project, incl. RQ, theory and methods. Originality, ambition level of novelty. Adherence to Open Science principles. Strategic fit with UEF and NOVEL. Potential to reach/re-enforce professional maturity/independence during the fellowship. Quality and appropriateness of the proposed collaborations, within UEF, regionally and internationally.
	IMPACT of the research project	Potential of the plan to produce scientific breakthrough and advance applicant's personal career aspirations. Quality of the proposed exploitation, dissemination, and communication strategies to academic and non-academic audiences, including publications. Quality of the planned networking activities.
	IMPLEMENTATION of the research project	Overall clarity, coherence, level of detail and feasibility of the work plan, work packages and the workflow. Appropriateness of the allocation of tasks and resources, project management structure, and the risk management plan. Feasibility of completion within the 36-month fellowship.
	OVERALL SCORE	Overall quality, coherence and comprehensiveness of the plans and competence. Acknowledgement of mobility and diversity as a potentially valuable contribution to the applicant's professional development and the NOVEL PF community.

Q&A

Piritta Parkkari, NOVEL Impact Manager

NOVEL  **MSCA**
POSTDOCTORAL PROGRAMME



Contact us at novel@uef.fi if you have any questions!
Webpage: www.uef.fi/novel: info on the programme, application process, templates, link to online application, updates...

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YouTube: [@NOVELMSCAPostdoctoralProgramme](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)



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