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Answer given by Ms Gabriel
on behalf of the European Commission
(26.10.2020)

The Commission cannot offer exact figures on how many of the current 7,500 MSCA¹ researchers might benefit from an extension. The Research Executive Agency (REA) has been in contact with dozens of researchers to address the difficulties they have in implementing their MSCA projects due to the pandemic. The specific concerns raised by 154 researchers in an online survey have been followed up on and solutions have been proposed by the REA.

The maximum EU contributions for MSCA projects depends on the maximum recruitment periods for researchers. Once reached, the living allowance for the researcher is no longer paid. However, the Commission has proposed a number of ad hoc solutions aimed at extending research periods without increasing the maximum EU contributions.²

The Commission in no way expects researchers to work unpaid. The Commission and the REA seek to identify solutions to help each researcher extend the periods of his/her project, such as through part-time employment.

MSCA researchers are paid to complete their projects and will receive full funding even if they have been prevented from working due to the pandemic. Even under normal circumstances researchers may not complete their entire research project, due to e.g. research difficulties. The Commission does not have any additional unused MSCA funds at its disposal that could be dedicated to a transitional solution. The conclusions of the European Council of July 2020 provide for additional funding from Next Generation EU for Horizon Europe and the Commission has proposed³ in its Draft Budget 2021 to allocate these funds to the strands contributing the most to the European recovery plan, namely health, climate and environment-related research and innovation activities.

¹ Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions

² [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/support/faq;grantAndTendertype=1;categories=;programme=H2020;actions=;keyword=COVID-19 outbreak;period=null](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/support/faq;grantAndTendertype=1;categories=;programme=H2020;actions=;keyword=COVID-19%20outbreak;period=null) e.g. FAQ # 13118, and https://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions/news/coronavirus-extensions-msca-projects_en

³ Statement of estimates of the European Commission for the financial year 2021 (p.91):

<https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/budgweb/EN/bud/proc/adopt/Documents/statement-of-estimates-2021.pdf>