

Host organization: National Science Centre

Country: Poland

Organization role: Coordinator

Project Acronym: POLONEZ

Project start and end date: 1st September 2015 – 31st August 2020

Type of MSC action, H2020: COFUND



Project objectives and research field:

The POLONEZ programme has welcomed 110 talented incoming researchers who were offered best conditions to carry out 12 or 24-month fellowships in all research areas in well-established Polish research organisations, both academic and private. Cofunded by MSCA Horizon 2020, POLONEZ also aims to develop their diverse competences and universal skills that might be beneficial in their further careers.

Tell us why the topic is important and/ or how it brings to advancement in your research field:

The incoming MSCA fellowship scheme implemented by the NCN leads to increased international visibility of Poland as a European country with a very good potential to offer research infrastructures and new positions for international researchers. The POLONEZ programme has attracted 110 international researchers to 50 domestic institutions, which marks a considerable strengthening of the European Research Area and further bolstering of scientific excellence.

The international aspect of the programme is strengthened by the participation of 91 grantees from different European countries, 13 from North America (USA, Canada), 5 from Asia (Singapore, India, Japan) and 1 from Australia.

What are the benefits of participating in a MSC action?

Thanks to the POLONEZ programme:

1. international fellows have been given the opportunity to collaborate with the best Polish academics and receive effective career guidance;

2. POLONEZ successful training programme and cross-sectoral study visits have increased the grantees' managerial and transferable skills as well as their chances of successful completion of research projects in the future;
3. fellows' position among researchers in their respective fields has been consolidated;
4. POLONEZ projects' results have been widely disseminated to academic and non-academic audiences;
5. new financially attractive job opportunities have been created at Polish host institutions for researchers and PhD students involved in the completion of the fellowships;
6. fellows' formal and informal interactions with colleagues at Polish host institutions have promoted sharing of interests and discussion of scientific problems, which may lead to new joint international projects and scientific collaboration.

Did you encounter any challenges during application/ implementation and did you get any help?

During the application process the National Science Centre received guidance from Polish National Contact Point as well as support from a previous MSCA Cofund grantee. Our main challenge at that stage was to meet all MSCA Cofund requirements and incorporate them in the programme dedicated to advanced researchers, and at the same time to harmonise them with NCN's existing standards and law provisions.

At the stage of programme implementation the most thought-provoking task was to design the POLONEZ training programme that would not only be tailor-made to answer the excellent researchers' needs but would also provide a challenging environment where participants could step back from their daily research routine and reflect upon themselves. Another challenge was to create effective and reliable monitoring tools.

Would you recommend others to apply? What useful advice/ tips can you give them?

While preparing the MSCA Cofund proposal it is essential to read and address all requirements specified in the call and evaluation criteria without underestimating or omitting any of them. Make sure that all MSCA principles are discussed in your proposal, especially those concerning the Open Data and Open Access policy, or requirements regarding ethics and dissemination. It is also really beneficial to consult your proposal and all ideas with respective National Contact Point and at least one of the previous successful MSCA COFUND grantees.

What strategies did your organization use to attract the fellow/s? Are they in line with national strategies supporting the widening EC policy?

First and foremost, the POLONEZ programme is a very attractive package combining:

1. attractive individual salary for the fellow
2. research grant to cover costs of hiring co-investigators, purchasing small equipment, materials and publications, costs of field research and attendance at both national and international conferences
3. integrated training programme – workshops and networking meetings to further develop the fellows' leadership and managerial abilities.

In addition, POLONEZ calls were widely promoted among potential host institutions and academics of all research disciplines. To facilitate cooperation between incoming researchers and host institutions, a number of promotion meetings were organised, in Poland and abroad, and a match-making tool was designed on the NCN website.

Last but not least, fellows who would like to continue their career in Poland beyond the POLONEZ fellowship are offered a wide range of funding schemes put forward by the NCN on a regular basis.