

## **ECTRIMS POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION & APPLICATION GUIDE**

*Updated July 2025*

### **PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION**

*ECTRIMS offers a postdoctoral research fellowship programme for young neuroscientists to facilitate their conduct of and training in basic, clinical or applied research on the topic of multiple sclerosis (MS) and related diseases. The goal of the programme is to maximise the exchange of information and to help grow the pool of well-trained research scientists focused on the treatment and research of MS and related diseases.*

### **KEY INFORMATION**

- For scientists and physicians of any nationality holding an MD, PhD, ScD, or equivalent, to provide mentored research training related to MS.
- 1- or 2-year funded fellowships in a European laboratory or clinic.
- Citizens of any country are eligible to apply to this programme. However, research training must be undertaken in a European laboratory or clinic.
- Research must be related to MS, in any relevant specialty or field.
- The application requires documents from the candidate, the proposed mentor, and the proposed host training institute, as well as other professional referees.
- Successful fellows and their mentors will be asked to provide progress and financial accounting reports at the end of each year.
- At the time of application, applicants should not have worked in any capacity at the same institution and/or under the same mentor as proposed in the fellowship application.
- The same mentor may not be proposed in more than 1 application per cycle, all categories combined.
- Institutes will be limited to 3 awards total among all fellowship categories and only 1 award per category.
- Application period: 1 August through 1 December 2025.

## PROGRAMME TERMS

### Applicant eligibility:

- Scientists and physicians who hold or are candidates for an MD, PhD, ScD or equivalent professional degree are eligible.
- Applicants must have received their advanced degree(s) prior to the start of the fellowship.
- At the time of application, applicants should not have worked in any capacity at the same institution and/or under the same mentor as proposed in the fellowship application.
- It is recommended that applicants have no more than five years of postdoctoral experience beyond their final degree (PhD, MD, ScD, BSc or equivalent) at the time of application.
- In general, successful applicants will be under 40 years of age at the time of application; exceptions under special circumstances will be considered.
- Citizens of any country are eligible to apply to this programme. However, research training must be undertaken in a European laboratory or clinic.
- Applicants and their mentors must affirm that there will be no language barriers that will impede the training experience.
- Applicants are restricted to 1 application per annual cycle, across all categories.

### Research Plan and Mentor

- The ECTRIMS Postdoctoral Research Fellowship is a research-focused experience. Prospective fellows must identify and present a cogent basic, clinical, or applied research project to be undertaken during the fellowship period, in collaboration with the fellowship mentor at the host institution.
- Applicants pursuing a research fellowship experience in any MS or related disease research topic (basic, applied or clinical, in any relevant specialty area) will be considered.
- The same mentor may not be proposed in more than 1 application per cycle, all categories combined.
  - If more than one applicant indicates the same mentor, the mentor will be contacted *prior to the application review* to select 1 application to go forward to the evaluation stage.

**ECTRIMS strongly recommends that mentors limit their engagement to 1 applicant only per application cycle, in order to avoid pulling out of**

**otherwise completed applications and leaving applicants with no mentor support.**

### **Fellowship Location**

- The fellowship period will be spent in a European research laboratory or clinic focused on problems associated with MS and/or related diseases.
- For fellowship applicants who are European citizens, the laboratory or clinic should be located in a different European country from that of the applicant's citizenship.
- For all applicants, the fellowship must take place at a different institute and in a different country than the fellow's current placement. These conditions are in place to ensure the programme's goal of cross-border exchange. Exceptions may be considered under special circumstances, which must be detailed in the application process.
- The applicant must determine in advance the fellowship location and identify a proposed mentor, all of which will be considered along with the applicant's own qualifications and research plan in the review and selection process.
- Institutes will be limited to 3 awards total among all fellowship categories and only 1 award per category.

### **Term**

- Fellowships of one- or two-years' duration will be available.
- Fellowships of a shorter duration than one year may be considered under special circumstances, which must be detailed in the application process.
- In most circumstances, fellowships will be initiated to coincide with the fall academic year initiation in September or October but can at any time following the award notification in April that is agreed between host institution, mentor, and fellow.
- The fellowship must be initiated (all paperwork submitted to the administrator; move to the training venue complete; work actively beginning) within six months of the receipt of an award letter from ECTRIMS or within six months of the completion of the doctoral degree for fellows who apply for and receive an ECTRIMS fellowship while still pursuing their doctoral degree. Any exceptions to this must be approved by the ECTRIMS Fellowship Committee.

## **Support**

- The fellowship will provide an annual stipend of 55,000.00 EUR for all fellows.
- ECTRIMS will also provide economy transportation from the successful candidate's home location to and from the location of the host institute. Travel expenses for family will not be provided. Transportation expenses will be reimbursed directly to the fellow, upon submission of receipts to ECTRIMS.
- ECTRIMS funding will be paid directly to the host institution, which will be considered the employer of the fellow. Stipends will be paid by the host institution to the fellow according to the institution's own payment policies and schedules.
- The ECTRIMS award must be used by the institution to pay the fellow's stipend ("salary") at the institutional appropriate rate for the fellow's stage of training, as a priority. Should there be any remaining funds, the remainder of the award can be used to support institutional social benefits (health care coverage, pension, other benefits) that may be required by the institution.
  - The expected fellow's total salary, as well as the expected fellow's total social benefits costs per year, must be indicated by the host institution.
  - If the total stipend plus benefits exceeds the amount provided by the ECTRIMS award, it is the responsibility of the institution/ mentor to supplement the ECTRIMS award to cover the entire required costs.
  - If the annual or prorated ECTRIMS award is not sufficient for the total required costs of the fellow (salary plus benefits), additional sources of funding that will be used to cover the total costs must be listed.
- It is expected that the research activities to be undertaken at the host institution will be supported by the host institution/mentor. No additional support for equipment, work materials, consumables, books, journal subscriptions, etc. should be paid for by the fellowship funds.
- Fellows will be expected to attend annual ECTRIMS congresses during the term of their fellowship and to make a presentation (at a young researcher's section or elsewhere) on their funded research. ECTRIMS will separately support travel and accommodations for congress participation.

## **Activities During the Fellowship Period**

- The ECTRIMS Research Fellowship is intended to be a full-time research and research training experience; however up to 10% of the fellow's time may be spent in teaching

or clinical care not associated with any research project or additional course work, as deemed appropriate by fellow and mentor.

- The anticipated research project must be described in detail by the applicant and mentor in their proposals to ECTRIMS.

### **Changes in the Fellowship Agreement**

- It is anticipated that the entire fellowship period will be undertaken within the host institution and with the identified mentor as planned. However, in special circumstances, ECTRIMS will consider requests to transfer the fellowship to a new European mentor or institution. Authorisation must be requested and provided prior to any such change. Unexpended funds at the original host institution must be returned to ECTRIMS in the event of an approved institutional transfer, and the balance will be reissued to a new host institution by ECTRIMS.
- The ECTRIMS Research Fellowship is an individual award and is not transferable to a different fellow at the host institution.
- ECTRIMS must be notified of early termination of any fellow, with any unused funds returned to ECTRIMS by the host institution.
- ECTRIMS may revoke or terminate a fellowship early if the fellow is unable to carry out the research as planned, a mentor requests termination because of unsatisfactory performance by the fellow, or in the event of cause established by due process of law or as a consequence of an institutional review committee's determination of fraud or malfeasance.

### **Reporting**

- Fellows and their mentors are required to provide annual progress and financial reports at the end of year one, and a final progress and financial reports at the conclusion of the fellowship period. Copies of any published papers emerging from the work should also be submitted as they appear. All progress reports will be kept in confidence at ECTRIMS to protect proprietary information before it is published.
  - "Year 1" progress reports are due 30 days prior to the end of the first year period and should be received at the ECTRIMS Secretariat prior to initiation of the second year of training. Final progress reports are due within 30 days after the completion of the fellowship training period.
  - Progress reports must include a summary of research undertaken, a letter of continuing support from the fellowship mentor (if a second year is planned), along with

accounting information from the mentor or host institution (form provided by ECTRIMS) of how funds provided for the fellow were allocated and whether additional funds were provided to the fellow by the host institution or other granting agency (source, amount, purpose).

- Publications that emerge from the work undertaken during the fellowship period should acknowledge the ECTRIMS Postdoctoral Research Fellowship Programme for its support.

### **Post-Fellowship Follow-Up**

- After the fellowship period, it is desirable, but not required, for the fellow to return to their original home institution for employment, to the extent possible. Post-fellowship career plans should be detailed as part of the application process.
- ECTRIMS fellows are requested to maintain contact with the ECTRIMS Secretariat, so that post-training career paths and publications can be followed with the goal of informing overall programme evaluation.

### **Application Process**

ECTRIMS Postdoctoral Research Fellowships will be awarded in a competitive review process conducted by members of the ECTRIMS Fellowship Committee. Applications will be evaluated based on the following:

- the candidate's qualifications, educational history, and evaluation of career plans;
- the qualifications and characteristics of the proposed fellowship mentor and host institution;
- the proposed research plan, including the Committee's assessment of the scientific quality, innovation, perceived feasibility;
- and the quality of letters of endorsement from the proposed mentor and from referees at the fellow's home institution, etc.

### **Part 1: Documents provided by the applicant through the online application system**

**All documents should be submitted as a PDF.**

1. A completed online application, available through the ECTRIMS website

2. An abbreviated curriculum vitae (CV) and bibliography of the applicant via the form “Biographical Sketch” provided by ECTRIMS, available for download in the online fellowship application system
3. Applicant’s career plans (not to exceed one page)
4. A research project description (not to exceed six pages), including figures, tables and references
5. A research project summary (abstract) (not to exceed 250 words)
6. Proof of knowledge of the training venue’s local language (e.g. language certificate, personal letter of confirmation)

## **Part 2: Supporting Materials Provided Directly to ECTRIMS by Others**

**All documents should be submitted as a PDF.**

The following additional items must be submitted electronically to the ECTRIMS Secretariat ([secretariat@ectrims.eu](mailto:secretariat@ectrims.eu)) by 1 December 2025. These should be submitted separately by their respective authors as confidential documents and should not be submitted with the materials requested in Part 1. Please be sure to ask referees to clearly identify the name of the applicant on all pages of their letters.

### **1. From the proposed mentor:**

- Letter of endorsement of the applicant, with special reference to any interactions they have had with the applicant and to the proposed research plan.
- Current abbreviated curriculum vitae and bibliography (no more than 5 pages) for the proposed mentor. The “Biographical Sketch” form provided in the online fellowship application system should be used. The applicant is responsible for forwarding this form to the proposed mentor for their use.

### **2. From the host institution:**

- Letter of support from the department chair (or other relevant institutional official) at the proposed host institution accepting the applicant as a fellow, should a fellowship be awarded.
- Institutional certification accepting the terms of the ECTRIMS fellowship regarding the funding payments and the funding amount. The necessary form, “Acceptance of ECTRIMS Payment Rules”, is available for download from the online application system. The applicant is responsible for forwarding this form to the proposed host institute for completion and submission to ECTRIMS.

### 3. From other referees:

- A total of 3 letters of reference from professionals acquainted with the applicant, from their home institution or elsewhere, that addresses the applicant's qualities and likelihood for success in their chosen MS field and career track.
  - One of these letters should be submitted from the proposed mentor for the applicant.
  - If relevant, applicants should include a letter from the home institution indicating that the fellow will be welcomed back to the institution once the fellowship period has concluded and describing the nature of the position available.

**Note:** Applicants should not arrange for more than the 3 requested letters of recommendation. There is no benefit to applicants who provide supplementary letters of recommendation.

### Final Reminder and Recap

The applicant's CV/bibliography and research project summary and description are to be submitted by the applicant using the online application system by 1 December 2025.

Mentor CV and support letter, as well as institutional and referee support letters and forms, are to be submitted **separately** by the mentor and/or institution as confidential documents to the ECTRIMS Secretariat ([secretariat@ectrims.eu](mailto:secretariat@ectrims.eu)) by 1 December 2025.

Incomplete or late applications will not be considered.

### Notification of ECTRIMS Award Deliberations

The ECTRIMS Fellowship Committee will review all proposals after the application period. Notification of the review outcomes will be made by the end of March 2026, to facilitate logistics involved in relocation by the following autumn.

For questions and further information, please contact the ECTRIMS Secretariat at: [secretariat@ectrims.eu](mailto:secretariat@ectrims.eu).