

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

## COMFUTURO FOURTH EDITION

## COMFUTURO iAGE

### A. General information

#### 1. What is the FGCSIC?

The Fundación General CSIC (FGCSIC) is a private, non-profit organization created in 2008 as a result of a joint institutional initiative by the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) and its founding patrons. Its mission is to promote public-private collaboration in the field of scientific research, innovation, and the advancement of knowledge.

It acts as the coordinator and manager of the ComFuturo IAGE programme, overseeing its overall design, implementation, and communication.

 <https://fgcsic.es>

#### 2. What is the CSIC?

The Spanish National Research Council (Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas – CSIC) is Spain's largest public research institution and one of the most prestigious in Europe. It conducts cutting-edge research across all scientific and technological fields and counts with more than 120 institutes throughout Spain.

Within the ComFuturo IAGE programme, the CSIC acts as the implementing partner and host institution. It employs the fellows, manages their employment contracts, and provides access to its research infrastructure and scientific environment.

 <https://www.csic.es>

#### 3. What is ComFuturo iAGE (Fourth Edition)?

ComFuturo iAGE is the fourth edition of the ComFuturo programme, a competitive public-private collaboration managed by the FGCSIC in partnership with the CSIC and outstanding private entities. This edition is co-financed under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions COFUND scheme, with cofunding also from CSIC and private collaborating entities, and focuses on addressing the global ageing challenge, with special attention to projects that incorporate digitalisation approaches.

 <https://www.comfuturo.es>



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#### 4. What should I do if I want to apply to ComFuturo IAGE?

If you wish to apply for a fellowship, follow these general steps:

- Check the eligibility criteria of the call for applications to ensure you meet all requirements.
- Identify a CSIC institute (see Q. 26) whose research aligns with your field of interest, in line with the eligible topic (see Q. 22) from the call that you select.
- Contact the institute and explain your research proposal and interest.
- If the CSIC institute agrees to support your application, they will provide the required letter of interest signed by its director, one of the documents you must attach to your application
- Prepare and submit your application through the official platform before the deadline.

#### 5. How many fellowships are offered and what is their duration?

The call offers a total of 10 postdoctoral fellowships. Each fellowship has a maximum duration of 36 months (three years) and includes a full-time employment contract with CSIC and an allowance for research, travel and secondment expenses related to the research project.

#### 6. Who manages the call and where can official information be found?

The call is managed by the FGCSIC. Official information, templates and the online application form are available on the FGCSIC ComFuturo call webpage (<https://fgcsic.es/convocatoria-evento/comfuturo-iage-iv-edicion-comfuturo>). Contact e-mail for application queries: [comfuturo@fgcsic.es](mailto:comfuturo@fgcsic.es).

## B. Eligibility requirements for candidates

#### 7. What is the minimum academic qualification required?

Candidates must be in possession of a PhD degree at the time of the call deadline. The date that determines eligibility is the date of the public defence and approval of the doctoral thesis (not the date on the diploma).

#### 8. What is the PhD award time window for eligibility?

The first doctoral degree must have been awarded within eight years prior to the call deadline of 9 January 2026. Concretely, the date of public defence must be on or after 9 January 2018 (inclusive). If the public defence took place before that date, the candidate will not meet this eligibility criterion unless a valid extension applies.

#### **9. If I hold more than one PhD, how is the 8-year rule computed?**

If a candidate holds more than one PhD, the 8-year period is counted from the date of the FIRST doctoral degree (i.e., the date of the first public defence).

#### **10. Can the 8-year PhD window be extended and for what reasons?**

Yes. Extensions may be requested for interruptions in research activity caused by: (a) illness or accident leading to sick leave for three months or more (an extension equivalent to the number of justified months may be applied); and (b) maternity/paternity leave (an extension of 1 year can be applied for each child born after the PhD award date). Supporting official documentation is required to justify any extension (medical certificates, birth certificates, official leave documentation, etc.).

#### **11. What document must I upload to prove my PhD date?**

You must upload a single PDF file containing an official document certifying the date of the public defence of the doctoral thesis. Acceptable documents include the thesis title page, an academic certificate, or any other official document that clearly indicates the date of the public defence. If a request for extension (e.g., parental or sick leave) is made, supporting evidence must be included in the same PDF.

#### **12. What is the MSCA mobility rule applied in this call?**

Applicants must comply with the MSCA mobility rule. Two variants exist in this call: the STANDARD mobility rule and the CAREER BREAK mobility rule (for researchers who have had a qualifying career break). Candidates must indicate which rule applies in the 'Declaration of Compliance with the Mobility Rule' and provide the required supporting evidence.

#### **13.Q: What is the STANDARD mobility rule for this call?**

Under the standard rule, the researcher must not have resided or carried out his/her main activity (work, studies, etc.) in Spain for more than 12 months in the three years immediately before the call deadline (i.e. in the period 9 January 2023 – 9 January 2026, inclusive). Short stays such as holidays, short conference visits or brief stays where the researcher's main residence and activity remained outside Spain are not counted.

#### **14. What is considered a 'short stay' for the mobility rule?**

Short stays are periods where the researcher's main residence and main activity remained in another country. Examples include holidays, short visits for conferences or similar brief periods during which the researcher did not live or work

in Spain. Extended periods of residence or work in Spain are not short stays and will be counted towards the 12-month limit.

### **15. Who can apply under the CAREER BREAK mobility rule and what are the conditions?**

The career break mobility rule applies to candidates who were not active in research for a continuous period of at least 12 months within the 18 months immediately prior to the call deadline (i.e., at least one 12-month continuous interruption between 9 July 2024 and 9 January 2026). For such candidates, the rule states that they must not have resided or carried out their main activity in Spain for more than three years in the five years immediately before the call deadline (i.e., in the period 9 January 2021 – 9 January 2026).

### **16. How is 'active research' defined for the career break rule?**

Active research is defined as being employed in research or holding a research fellowship. Periods of parental leave or unpaid leave do NOT count as active research, even if the applicant had a formal employment contract or fellowship during that time. Other activities such as publishing papers or maintaining an affiliation without a paid contract or fellowship also do NOT count as active research.

### **17. What evidence is required for mobility compliance?**

Candidates must upload a Declaration of Compliance with the Mobility Rule using the supplied template. The template requires a continuous timeline (without gaps) covering the last 36 months — or 60 months if the career break mobility rule applies — prior to the call deadline. For each month/period candidates must indicate: the country of residence and/or country where the main activity was carried out; the type of activity (employment, unemployment, studies, leave, etc.); the name of employer or institution (if applicable); and the type of supporting evidence provided. Evidence may include employment contracts, work permits, residence certificates, rental agreements, proof of unemployment, parental or sick leave documents, refugee status documentation, etc. The complete timeline and all supporting evidence must be submitted as a single PDF file (template + annexed evidence).

### **18. What happens if my mobility declaration contains gaps or lacks supporting evidence?**

Failure to provide a complete, coherent and supported timeline may render the application ineligible. FGCSIC may request additional documentation at any time to verify the declaration; applicants must be prepared to provide supplementary proof if requested. Incomplete declarations will risk ineligibility and rejection from the process.



#### 19. Is the mobility rule calculation inclusive of the call deadline date?

Yes. The mobility rule will be calculated including the date of the call deadline (9 January 2026).

#### 20. Can time spent in Spain for compulsory national service, short stays, or refugee status procedures be excluded from the mobility calculation?

Yes. Time spent in Spain for short stays (as defined earlier, see Q. 14), compulsory national service, or as part of a procedure for obtaining refugee status under the Geneva Convention will NOT be counted towards the 12-month (standard rule) or 3-year (career break rule) limits. However, long stays for work or residence will be counted.

## C. Eligibility requirements for projects

#### 21. How should I select the research topic for my proposal?

Applicants must select one eligibility research topic (A–J) under which their project will be framed. Each candidate may submit only ONE application to ONE eligible research topic. Multiple applications from the same candidate will not be accepted.

#### 22. Which are the eligible research topics?

The ComFuturo iAGE call offers ten (10) eligible research topics, identified as Topics A–J, under which applicants must frame their research proposals. Each topic addresses the overarching challenge of ageing, most through the incorporation of digitalisation approaches.

Eligible research topics:

- Topic A: Impact of Cellular Hypoxia on Ageing-Related Diseases
- Topic B: Natural Language Technologies for Accessible, Cognitive-Aware and Personalised Communication in Older Adults
- Topic C: Smart Homes for Older Adults: Sensors and Technologies for Invisible and Personalised Care
- Topic D: Digital Solutions and Platforms for Healthy, Safe and Socially Active Ageing in Older Adults
- Topic E: AI-Powered Prediction of Early Ageing and Strategies for Rejuvenation
- Topic F: Digital Environmental Sensing and Climate-Aware Urban Ecosystems for Healthy Ageing
- Topic G: Digital Twins for Anticipatory Geriatric Care
- Topic H: Mechanical Markers of Tissue Dysfunction Due to Ageing: Digital Twins and Machine Learning



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- Topic I: Big Data and AI to Unravel the Role of Complex Structural Variants in Ageing
- Topic J: Personalised AI for Healthy Ageing: Social Robots as Adaptive Support Systems

### 23. Which topics require digitalisation to be incorporated?

Most topics explicitly require the incorporation of digitalisation. The table published in the Call guidelines indicates for each topic whether digitalisation is mandatory. In particular, Topics B–J (Topics B–J) require digitalisation approaches. Topic A (Impact of Cellular Hypoxia on Ageing-Related Diseases) is indicated as 'Not necessarily' requiring digitalisation; therefore proposals for Topic A may or may not include digitalisation approaches.

### 24. How are the ten fellowships allocated across topics?

The ComFuturo iAGE programme offers ten (10) fellowships distributed across ten eligible research topics (A–J). Fellowships 1–5 correspond to the four predefined topics A–D, with Topic A providing two fellowships (Fellowships 1 and 2) and Topics B–D one fellowship each. Fellowships 6–10 correspond to Topics E–J, with a maximum of one fellowship per topic.

### 25. How are host institutes assigned?

Applicants for Fellowships 1–5 (Topics A–D) may select any CSIC institute as the host, provided that the proposed research fits within the selected topic. In contrast, Fellowships 6–10 (Topics E–J) must be carried out at specific, predefined CSIC institutes listed in the call guidelines.

### 26. Where can I consult the list of CSIC research centres and institutes?

The CSIC website hosts an online search tool of its research institutes: <https://www.csic.es/en/csic/organisation/institutes-centres-units>. Additionally, FGCSIC provides a compiled PDF list which includes contact details, available for download on the online Call application webpage: <https://fgcsic.es/convocatoria-evento/comfuturo-iage-iv-edicion-comfuturo/>

### 27. Are CSIC joint centres and institutes (centros "mixtos") eligible in the ComFuturo iAGE call?

Yes, joint CSIC centres are eligible and same rules apply than to own CSIC centres.

### 28. Can a CSIC institute host more than one ComFuturo fellow?

A CSIC institute may host several ComFuturo fellows, but only one fellowship per topic can be hosted at a given institute.



**29. For Topic A, can both fellowships be hosted at the same CSIC institute?**

Yes. Both fellowships under Topic A – Impact of Cellular Hypoxia on Ageing-Related Diseases may be hosted at the same CSIC institute, provided that the two proposals are scientifically distinct and meet all eligibility and quality criteria.

**30. Are there restrictions on where the research project must be carried out?**

Yes. For Topics A–D (Fellowships 1–5), the host CSIC institute may be freely chosen from among the more than 120 CSIC institutes. For Topics E–J (Fellowships 6–10) the host institute is predefined for each topic and applications to these topics must name the corresponding predefined CSIC institute.

**31. What knowledge areas must applicants indicate in the application?**

Applicants must indicate the knowledge area of their proposal among 19 eligible areas grouped into Social Sciences & Humanities (Areas 1–8), Mathematical/Physical/Chemical/Engineering Sciences (Areas 9–15), and Life Sciences (Areas 16–19). The list of area codes (e.g. CSO, DER, ECO, MTM, FIS, TIC, BIO, BME, etc.) is provided in the online application and in the call guidelines.

**32. What characteristics must ComFuturo projects have?**

Projects must be original, aim to resolve current problems through innovative methodologies, demonstrate high potential for transfer and exploitation, have a maximum duration of 3 years, comply with the eligible research topics, and be carried out at an eligible CSIC institute. The Research proposal must argue how the chosen CSIC institute has the infrastructures and capacities to host and successfully develop the project.

**33. Is a Declaration of Interest from the host institute required?**

Yes. A Declaration of Interest letter, using the official template in the online form, must be provided and digitally signed by the Director of the proposed CSIC host institute. The Director acts as Supervisor 1 and institutional representative. The proposed Supervisor 2 must be named in this declaration (but the Supervisor 2 signature is not required at this stage). The Declaration of Interest must be uploaded as a PDF (max 1 MB).

**34. Who can be Supervisor 2 and what are the requirements?**

Supervisor 2 is normally an academic CSIC researcher (e.g. the group leader) proposed by the applicant and named in the Declaration of Interest letter. The proposed Supervisor 2 must be contractually bound to CSIC for the full 36-month duration of the fellowship. The Scientific-Technical Board will assess and validate the suitability and final appointment of Supervisor 2 before the start of the fellowship.

### 35. Can the supervision structure be changed after selection?

Yes. The final composition of the supervisory team (Supervisor 1, Supervisor 2, and potential non-academic Supervisor 3) will be reviewed and may be adjusted by FGCSIC, in agreement with the host institute, so long as the fellow is fully supported. The Scientific-Technical Board reserves the right to amend supervisory assignments as needed.

### 36. Are non-academic secondments and supervision allowed?

Yes. If a fellow undertakes a non-academic secondment, a supervisor or mentor from the host non-academic entity (Supervisor 3) may be involved to provide an intersectoral perspective and support the secondment. Secondments and the involvement of non-academic supervisors are encouraged to enhance intersectoral training and knowledge transfer.

## D. Application procedure and deadlines

### 37. How do I submit an application?

A: Applications must be submitted via the online application form accessible on FGCSIC's ComFuturo call webpage: <https://fgcsic.es/convocatoria-evento/comfuturo-iage-iv-edicion-comfuturo/>. The form must be completed in one single session as data cannot be saved. Prepare all required documents in advance and upload them following the templates and format requirements provided.

### 38. What is the application deadline and time zone?

The deadline for submission is 9 January 2026 at 10:00 a.m. (local time of Peninsular Spain — Central European Time, CET / UTC+1). Applications received after this time will NOT be accepted.

### 39. What documents must be uploaded and what are the size and format limits?

All documentation must be uploaded in PDF. Key items include:

- CV merged with Research Proposal (single PDF, CV first) — English, researcher digital signature, MAX 7 MB.
- Ethics documents (Ethics Self-Assessment Form; Declaration of Responsibility if applicable) — each PDF max 1 MB.
- Declaration of Interest letter from proposed CSIC host institute — PDF max 1 MB, digitally signed by the Director.
- Copy of ID card or Passport (PDF max 1 MB).
- Copy of thesis title / academic certificate proving PhD defence date (PDF max 1 MB). Include supporting documentation for parental or sick leave if requesting an extension.



- Declaration of Compliance with the Mobility Rule with attached supporting documentation (PDF max 4 MB) — researcher digital signature required.
- Evidence for family allowance (if claiming) — PDF max 4 MB.

If supporting documents are in a language other than Spanish or English, candidates must also upload a translation into Spanish or English. Multiple supporting documents may be merged into a single PDF per category, provided the file size limit is respected.

#### 40. What should I include in the CV and Research Proposal, and how should they be submitted?

Applicants must prepare both the CV and the Research Proposal using the official templates provided in the online application platform. Each template includes specific instructions that must be carefully followed. The CV should describe the applicant's education, professional experience, publications, and achievements relevant to the ComFuturo iAGE fellowship. The Research Proposal should outline the proposed project, objectives, methodology, expected results, and its alignment with the selected ComFuturo topic.

Both documents — the CV and the Research Proposal — must be combined into a single PDF file and uploaded together under the corresponding section of the application form.

#### 41. In what language must the application be completed?

The Curriculum Vitae and Research Proposal must be in ENGLISH and follow the specific templates provided. Other supporting documents may be in Spanish or English, or accompanied by an English/Spanish translation if originally in another language.

#### 42. What should I do if I do not have a digital certificate to sign the required documents electronically?

A qualified electronic signature (digital certificate) is strongly recommended to sign all documents as required by the ComFuturo iAGE Call Guidelines. Please obtain a valid digital certificate as soon as possible so that you fully comply with the call requirements.

Should you be unable to obtain a digital certificate before the deadline, you may exceptionally submit handwritten signatures, provided this is duly justified. In such cases, you must scan the signed document and upload it as a PDF. The scanned document must show the following:

- Clear identification of the signer: Include your full name, national identification number (DNI/NIE/passport), directly beneath or beside your signature.



- The date of signature: State the day, month and year of signing, alongside the signature, for example, "Signed in [city] on [dd/mm/yyyy]".

The document must be legible: All text, dates and signatures must be clearly readable in the scanned PDF. Ensure the scan is in good resolution and free from shadows or distortion.

#### 43. Can I save and return to my application later?

No. The online form must be filled in one single session. Prepare all sections and files in advance to ensure you can complete and submit the form in one go.

#### 44. How will I know that my application was submitted successfully?

Once you submit the application via the online platform, you will receive a confirmation e-mail containing a certificate confirming that the application has been sent. Keep this confirmation for your records.

#### 45. What happens if I upload documents in the wrong format or omit essential files?

The absence of the Research Proposal or CV in the online form, or their inclusion in an incorrect format or language, will be considered NOT RECTIFIABLE and the proposal will be directly rejected as ineligible. FGCSIC may contact applicants to correct rectifiable errors — corrections must be sent by e-mail within 10 calendar days. If corrections are not received within that timeframe, the application will be rejected.

#### 46. Where can I ask questions during the application process?

Questions regarding the application process should be sent to [comfuturo@fgcsic.es](mailto:comfuturo@fgcsic.es).

## E. Fellowship description, duration and allowances

#### 47. What items are included in the fellowship remuneration package?

Each fellowship includes (values **include the employer's social security contributions**):

- A living allowance: €56,400 per year (€4,700 per month).
- A mobility allowance: €2,400 per year (€200 per month).
- A possible family allowance: €2,400 per year (€200 per month) — only for researchers with family obligations, subject to evidence.



Additionally, a complementary allowance of €15,000 per year (€1,250 per month) is allocated to cover research, travel and secondment costs required for the execution of the project.

#### **48. How is the gross remuneration calculated and what amount will I receive on payroll?**

The gross remuneration that the fellow will receive on payroll is calculated on the basis of the living, mobility and where applicable family allowances AFTER deduction of the employer's social security contributions (payable by the employer). The total gross salary is estimated to be between €43,500 and €45,500 per year. The final gross salary will be confirmed at the time of signing the employment contract and will remain the same for the three years of the fellowship, subject to social security contribution variations.

#### **49. Who manages the research, travel and secondment allowance and how must it be justified?**

The complementary allowance of €15,000 per year is managed by the CSIC host institute for the benefit of the fellow. This allowance must be used exclusively for permitted concepts (equipment, consumables, services necessary for research execution, conference participation, publication and protection costs, secondment expenses, etc.) and must be justified in the follow-up reports. Some expenditures may require prior written approval from FGCSIC.

#### **50. Who is entitled to the family allowance and how is family status determined?**

Family allowance is provided to researchers with family obligations defined as: persons linked to the researcher by marriage, by a relationship with equivalent legal status to marriage where recognised, or dependent children maintained by the researcher. Family status is determined at the deadline of the call and may be reviewed during the fellowship. If new family obligations arise after the start of the fellowship and are approved, the family allowance payment will become effective in the payment enrollment of the month following official communication and approval.

#### **51. Are secondments mandatory and what are the rules governing them?**

Secondments are strongly encouraged but not mandatory. They may take place in academic or non-academic institutions, in Spain or abroad, and may include placements at Associated Partners. Rules include:

- No single secondment at the same institution may exceed a total duration of 6 months.
- Secondments can be in one continuous period or split into shorter stays.



- Total duration of all secondments must not exceed one third of the fellowship (i.e. 12 months over 36 months).
- Any proposed secondments should be aligned with the research and career development objectives and must be coordinated with and approved by the fellow's supervisors, CSIC and FGCSIC.

## F. Supervision, training and career development

### 52. What is the supervisory structure for ComFuturo fellows?

Each fellow may be supported by up to three supervisors:

- Supervisor 1 — Institute Director: provides institutional support and oversight. The Declaration of Interest letter must be signed by the Director.
- Supervisor 2 — Academic Supervisor: a CSIC researcher (typically the group leader) who provides scientific guidance. The proposed Supervisor 2 must be named in the Declaration of Interest and must be contractually bound to CSIC for the entire 36-month fellowship period. The Scientific-Technical Board will validate Suitability.
- Supervisor 3 — Non-Academic Supervisor: if applicable, a mentor from a non-academic secondment host who supports intersectoral training.

### 53. What are the supervisors' expected qualifications and roles?

All supervisors must demonstrate proven excellence in research, experience in mentoring, broad professional networks and the capacity to add value to the fellow's career. Supervisor 1 and Supervisor 2 will ensure resources and day-to-day scientific guidance. Supervisor 3 (where applicable) will support non-academic secondments and industry/civil society interactions.

### 54. What is the Personalised Career Development Plan (PCDP)?

The PCDP is a tailored plan prepared by the fellow together with the supervisory team in the early months of the fellowship. It outlines research objectives, training needs, transferable skills, dissemination and networking activities and long-term career goals. The PCDP will be reviewed periodically and must be submitted to FGCSIC as part of follow-up reporting.

### 55. What training opportunities will fellows receive?

Fellows will have access to research-oriented training at the host institute, CSIC's institutional training catalogue (advanced courses across disciplines and transversal areas), and specialised training offered by Associated Partners. Workshops in transferable skills (ethics, technology transfer, entrepreneurship, research valorisation, etc.) will also be provided.

## G. Ethical issues and approvals

### 56. Do I have to address ethics in my application?

Yes. Applicants must complete an Ethics Self-Assessment Form (template is available in the online application form) as part of their application. They must identify potential ethical issues and demonstrate awareness of applicable ethical principles and compliance with international, European and national law. General guidance is provided in the Ethics Handbook available in the application form.

### 57. What types of research are excluded from funding on ethical grounds?

The call excludes research that aims at: (a) human cloning for reproductive purposes; (b) modifying the genetic heritage of human beings in a way that makes changes heritable (except bona fide research related to cancer treatment of the gonads); and (c) creating human embryos solely for research or for stem cell procurement (including somatic cell nuclear transfer).

### 58. What must I do if my proposal contains sensitive ethical issues?

If the Ethics Self-Assessment indicates sensitive ethical issues (by ticking the relevant boxes), applicants must sign a Declaration of Responsibility (template is available in the online application form) in which they undertake, if selected, to submit a formal request to the CSIC Ethics Committee for an ethical evaluation within ten calendar days of receiving notification of selection. No research involving such sensitive ethics issues may commence before the CSIC Ethics Committee's approval and any other required authorisations are obtained.

## H. Evaluation and selection process

### 59. How is eligibility checked and what are the consequences of failing the eligibility check?

After the call closes, FGCSIC will check compliance with eligibility requirements and the validity of digital signatures. Absence of the Research Proposal or CV in the correct format/language will be considered NOT RECTIFIABLE and lead to direct rejection. FGCSIC may contact candidates so that they correct rectifiable errors via e-mail within 10 calendar days. Applications that remain non-compliant after correction attempts will be rejected and notified by e-mail. If an ineligibility is later discovered at any stage, the proposal will be declared ineligible and not considered further.

#### **60. Who evaluates the eligible proposals and what is the evaluation sequence?**

Eligible proposals are evaluated externally by two independent reviewers selected by the European Science Foundation (ESF). Each reviewer produces an assessment report. Applicants receive these reports and have up to five working days to submit a rebuttal via the ESF online platform. After the rebuttal phase, an international Review Panel convened by ESF considers all materials and produces a consensus report and ranking delivered to FGCSIC. The top proposals per topic advance to the interview stage conducted by FGCSIC.

#### **61. What is the weight of external evaluation and interviews in the final decision?**

The external evaluation accounts for 80% of the final mark and the personal interview accounts for 20%. The external evaluation uses three principal criteria with relative weights: Excellence (50%), Impact (30%), and Implementation (20%). Applicants must achieve a minimum threshold of 70% in the external evaluation to pass to the interview phase. An overall threshold of 70% in the final mark is required to be preselected for funding.

#### **62. What are the sub-criteria under 'Excellence' in the external evaluation?**

Excellence sub-criteria include: relevance of the proposed project, scientific quality and feasibility, originality and progress beyond the state of the art, interdisciplinarity/internationalisation/intersectoriality, integration of gender dimension, appropriateness and feasibility of planned open science practices, quality of the data management strategy, and assessment of the researcher's scientific excellence, outputs and leadership potential.

#### **63. What are the main 'Impact' considerations?**

Impact assesses the expected applicability of results, the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of the Dissemination and Exploitation Plan (DEP), and the potential to transfer results to the productive fabric and society at large.

#### **64. What does 'Implementation' evaluate?**

Implementation evaluates the coherence and feasibility of the work plan and the appropriateness of the proposed CSIC host institute to host and support the project.

#### **65. How are interviews organized and what do they assess?**

Interviews are conducted by ComFuturo's Interview & Selection Committee via videoconference in English or Spanish (if the candidate is fluent). In principle, the two highest-ranked candidates per eligible topic will be interviewed. Interview



criteria (weight within the 20%) include: understanding and adherence to the programme philosophy and motivation, independence and experience leading research or teams, knowledge transfer and industry collaboration potential, and presentation and communication skills.

#### **66. What scoring scale is used and how are ties resolved?**

Scoring will use a 5-point system, where 0 means 'very poor' and 5 means 'excellent'. Scores are expressed to one decimal place and specific thresholds apply at each stage. The final mark comprises 80% from the external evaluation of the submitted proposal and 20% from the interview assessment.

Applicants must achieve at least 70% in the external evaluation mark to progress to the interview phase. In order to be preselected for funding, a minimum overall threshold of 70% in the combined final mark is required.

If two or more proposals receive identical final marks (*ex aequo*), priority for ranking on the final lists will be determined in the following sequence:

- Excellence: Proposals with the highest marks for scientific excellence will take precedence.
- Impact: If still tied, preference is given to those with the higher impact score.
- Implementation: Should proposals remain equal, those with the strongest marks for implementation will rank higher.
- Interview performance: If several proposals are still indistinguishable after applying the above criteria, candidates with the highest interview assessment marks will be prioritised.

#### **67. What feedback will applicants receive?**

Applicants will receive the two external assessment reports and the consensus report. Those interviewed will receive a final evaluation report including final scores for the external evaluation and the interview. All definitive ineligible applicants will receive an e-mail stating the reasons for ineligibility.

## **I. Rebuttal and Redress procedures**

#### **68. What is the role of the European Scientific Foundation (ESF) rebuttal process?**

The ESF rebuttal phase follows the individual external evaluation reports. During this stage, candidates can submit a formal response to address or clarify points raised by the evaluators. The goal is to ensure fairness and transparency by allowing candidates to correct misunderstandings or provide additional relevant information. The ESF evaluates these rebuttals and can adjust the scores or evaluations if justified. This process precedes the redress phases. The rebuttal will

be managed by ESF via an online platform and there with a timespan of 5 working days for candidates.

#### **69. Can I request a redress if I disagree with a stage decision?**

Yes, candidates have the right to submit a redress request following each evaluation phase, which includes the eligibility check, external evaluation consensus report, and the interview final report phases. Redress requests must be submitted in writing to [comfuturo@fgcsic.es](mailto:comfuturo@fgcsic.es) within ten calendar days of the date of notification of the relevant evaluation result.

It is important to note that also, prior to the submission of the evaluation consensus reports, a rebuttal stage managed by the European Scientific Foundation (ESF) will occur after the individual external evaluation reports are issued (see Q. 66).

#### **70. What may the redress procedure examine?**

The redress procedure will examine procedural shortcomings and possible errors in the process. It will NOT challenge the scientific or technical judgement of external experts, panels or committees. Applicants should clearly describe the grounds for their complaint and specify the relevant phase (eligibility, external evaluation, or interview).

#### **71. How many redress requests can be submitted?**

Only one redress request per proposal and per phase will be considered. The re-evaluated score is final and may be lower than the original score. All redress requests will be handled confidentially.

## **J. Outcome of the call and appointment of candidates**

#### **72. When will the results be published?**

The outcome of the call is expected in July 2026. Results will be published on FGCSIC ([www.fgcsic.es](http://www.fgcsic.es)) and ComFuturo ([www.comfuturo.es](http://www.comfuturo.es)) websites. Candidates will also be informed by e-mail.

#### **73. What are the steps after selection?**

Selected candidates will receive an e-mail and must confirm acceptance or declination of the fellowship within 10 calendar days. If a candidate declines, the fellowship will be offered to the next candidate on the reserve list in ranking order. After finalisation of redress phases, the outcome is considered definitive.

#### 74. When is the anticipated start date for the fellowships?

The start of fellowships and incorporation into the CSIC host institutes is planned for October 2026. The exact incorporation date (which in principle will be the same for all fellows) will be notified to selected fellows after the outcome of the call. If a researcher fails to incorporate after the starting date has passed, the fellowship may no longer be activated.

#### 75. Can the call be declared void for certain topics?

Yes. The call may be declared void for one, some or all of the research topics if so proposed by ComFuturo's Interview & Selection Committee. FGCSIC will publish such decisions as necessary.

## K. Fellows' commitments, obligations and incompatibilities

#### 76. What are some principal obligations of ComFuturo fellows?

Selected fellows will be Marie Skłodowska-Curie researchers and must comply with MSCA standards. Key obligations include:

- Assume that the programme is managed by FGCSIC and respond to FGCSIC for any matters concerning the project.
- Accept CSIC as employer (CSIC will manage holidays, sick leave, paternity/maternity leave and contractual employment issues).
- Work **EXCLUSIVELY** on the ComFuturo project (no other paid work or fellowship that provides a salary). Teaching is allowed only with prior approval and up to a maximum of 80 hours per year.
- Participate in FGCSIC requests for availability, consultations, or dissemination activities when required.
- Accept use of their image for dissemination activities by FGCSIC during the fellowship.
- Consult FGCSIC about any variation to the approved research project before implementing modifications.
- Refer to themselves as 'ComFuturo fellows' in all communications and publications.
- Follow Open Science principles, FAIR data management and prepare a Data Management Plan.
- Submit at least one annual follow-up report and a final report with financial justification of research and secondment costs. Submit the PCDP early after recruitment.
- Complete MSCA final evaluation questionnaire at the end of the fellowship and a follow-up questionnaire two years after the fellowship ends.
- Inform FGCSIC of any conflict affecting fulfilment of obligations.

- Comply with any legal obligations arising from their employment contract with CSIC.

#### **77. Are ComFuturo fellows allowed to carry out other paid work or hold additional grants?**

No. The fellowships are incompatible with any other paid work, fellowship or grant that implies a separate salary. Fellows must inform FGCSIC of any possible cause of incompatibility, such as obtaining unrelated grants or other income sources.

#### **78. What are the reporting obligations?**

Fellows must submit follow-up reports (at least annually) and a final report on project results. Reports include a narrative section and a financial section that justifies the costs charged to the research, travel and secondment allowance. The host CSIC institute normally manages expenditures and assists with reporting.

## **L. Acknowledgement of EU funding and intellectual property**

#### **79. How should fellows acknowledge EU funding in publications and events?**

Fellows must acknowledge ComFuturo, FGCSIC and the co-funding of the European Commission under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement N° 101217423 in any related publication or public event. The standard acknowledgement text (to be used in principle) is:

*"This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement N° 101217423. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Executive Agency, granting authority. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them."*

Final wording and exact reference will be confirmed to researchers once fellowships start, but fellows must include the funding acknowledgement as required.

#### **80. Who owns intellectual and industrial property resulting from the project?**

By agreement between FGCSIC and CSIC, the intellectual and industrial property arising from research during the fellowship will belong to CSIC. This is without prejudice to proper recognition of authorship and the rights that regulations grant



to inventors or authors. Fellows must immediately notify CSIC and FGCSIC in writing of any result that may be subject to protection (patent, copyright, etc.).

## M. Legal considerations and data protection

### 81. What is the privacy and data protection policy for applicants?

FGCSIC will process personal data in compliance with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR), the Spanish Organic Law 3/2018 (LOPDGDD) and other applicable laws. Personal data is processed exclusively to manage, evaluate and monitor the call, and to fulfil legal obligations. Access is restricted to authorised FGCSIC staff, evaluators and partner organisations, all bound by confidentiality. No data will be disclosed to third parties without consent except when legally required. Data will be retained only as long as necessary and then blocked, anonymised or securely deleted according to retention policies.

### 82. How can applicants exercise their data protection rights?

Applicants may exercise rights of access, rectification, erasure, restriction, objection and portability, and withdraw consent by contacting FGCSIC at [info@fgcsic.es](mailto:info@fgcsic.es) or by post to: C/ Joaquín Costa, 12 – 28002 Madrid (reference: 'Exercise of rights'). For other questions related to data protection contact also [info@fgcsic.es](mailto:info@fgcsic.es). Applicants may file a complaint with the Spanish Data Protection Agency ([www.aepd.es](http://www.aepd.es)) if they consider their rights are not properly safeguarded.

### 83. What legal obligations arise from acceptance of the call rules?

Participation in the call implies acceptance of the terms and conditions in the guidelines. Detection of non-compliance at any stage can lead to cancellation of the application or fellowship. Applicants confirm that information provided is truthful and may face disciplinary actions for incorrect information. FGCSIC reserves the right to interpret and resolve doubts and to take measures as considered appropriate.

## N. Practical examples (anticipated scenarios)

### 84. Example: My PhD public defence took place on 9 January 2018. Am I eligible?

Yes. The call states that PhDs defended ON or AFTER 9 January 2018 (inclusive) meet the 8-year requirement for the 9 January 2026 deadline. If you defended on that date, you are within the eligible window.

**85. Example: My public defence was on 8 January 2018. Am I eligible?**

No, unless you can justify a valid extension due to parental or sick leave that alters the effective eligibility window. Without such an accepted extension the defence date precedes the eligibility threshold.

**86. Example: I spent 10 months working in Spain between January 2024 and December 2024 and had a subsequent 3-month visit in 2025. Do these exceed the standard mobility rule?**

Under the standard MSCA mobility rule applicable to ComFuturo iAGE, you must not have resided or carried out your main activity (work or studies) in Spain for more than 12 months in total during the three years immediately prior to the call deadline (9 January 2026).

In this case, the combined period of 10 months of work plus a 3-month visit would total 13 months, which exceeds the 12-month limit and therefore does not fulfil the standard mobility rule.

**However**, short stays (see Q. 14) such as attending conferences, holidays, or brief visits do not count towards this 12-month limit. It is important to carefully document each period of residence or activity in the mobility timeline template provided with the application, including justifications for any short stays, and supply appropriate supporting evidence.

Regarding the three-month visit in 2025, if this was a short stay (e.g. conference attendance or holiday) rather than a main activity or residency, it would not be counted. If the visit involved employment or was funded by a different entity in Spain, it may be considered main activity and counted. Each period must be carefully documented in the mobility compliance document and provide supporting evidence.

**87. Example: I had a continuous 14-month break from research within the 18 months prior to the deadline. Can I apply under the career break rule?**

Potentially yes. The career break mobility rule applies to researchers with a continuous period of at least 12 months without active research (see definition of "active research" in Q. 16) within the 18 months immediately prior to the deadline. If you meet that condition, you must use the 60-month timeline and verify that you have not resided or carried out main activity in Spain for more than 3 years in the 5 years prior to the deadline. Provide clear documentation of the career break and other relevant periods in the mobility declaration.



**88. If my supporting documents are not in English or Spanish, what should I do?**

You must provide a translation into Spanish or English together with the original documents. Upload both the original documents and the translation in a single PDF per category where appropriate, respecting the stated file size limits.

**89. Can I propose to integrate at any CSIC institute if I apply to Topic E?**

No. For Topic E (and Topics F–J where indicated), the host institute is predefined and listed in the call. Topic E (AI-Powered Prediction ...) is predefined to the Institute for Neuroscience (IN) and similar preassignments apply for the other defined topics. Only Topics A–D allow open choice among CSIC institutes.

**90. If I foresee secondments, should I include them in the proposal?**

Yes. If secondments are already foreseen, it is recommended to describe them in the Research proposal to emphasise the intersectoral and international dimensions of the project. Planned secondments can strengthen the application by demonstrating broader impact and alignment with MSCA objectives.

## O. Final remarks and contact information

**91. What should I do if I need further clarification not covered here?**

For clarifications on the call, templates, or procedures, contact [comfuturo@fgcsic.es](mailto:comfuturo@fgcsic.es). For data protection queries contact [info@fgcsic.es](mailto:info@fgcsic.es). The official call webpage, <https://fgcsic.es/convocatoria-evento/comfuturo-iage-iv-edicion-comfuturo/> and the templates in the online application form, accessible from that webpage should be consulted as the reference materials.

**92. Is this FAQ legally binding?**

No. This FAQ is an explanatory, detailed guidance document prepared from the official ComFuturo Fourth Edition Call Guidelines. The official call guidelines published by FGCSIC at <https://fgcsic.es/convocatoria-evento/comfuturo-iage-iv-edicion-comfuturo/> are the legally binding source. In case of discrepancies, the official call documentation and FGCSIC's interpretations prevail.