

Call Document Guide for Applicants



Training Future Leaders 4 the
European Bio-Based Industries

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2 Introduction

2.1 Talent4BBI Early Career Researcher doctoral programme

Talent4BBI is the first industry led PhD MSCA programme in Ireland and is managed by BiOrbic, the Bioeconomy SFI Research Centre located in University College Dublin (UCD). Talent4BBI brings together 10 industry and 8 academic partners across 8 Member States and 1 Associated Country.

The primary aim of Talent4BBI is to train 11 PhD students to become highly skilled industry-ready Early-Stage Researchers (ESR's) equipped to lead the future of the European bio-based industry sector.

This programme provides a unique opportunity for the ESRs to develop key skills, competencies and experience required by the bio-based industries through a targeted training programme for future bioeconomy leaders.

During the 60-month programme duration, the 11 ESRs will undertake 48-month PhDs co-hosted by industry and academia. Three additional industry partners will actively participate and contribute their expertise through hosting of summer and winter school training events.

All of the Talent4BBI research projects are co-designed by our academic and industry supervisors. Talent4BBI will give the ESRs experience of each of the four Strategic Orientations (SOs) of the **Strategic Innovation and Research Agenda (SIRA)**, as outlined by the Bio based Industries Consortium (BIC) and the Bio-Based Industries Joint Undertaking (BBIJU). These SOs are Biomass (SO1), Processes (SO2), Products (SO3) and Markets (SO4).

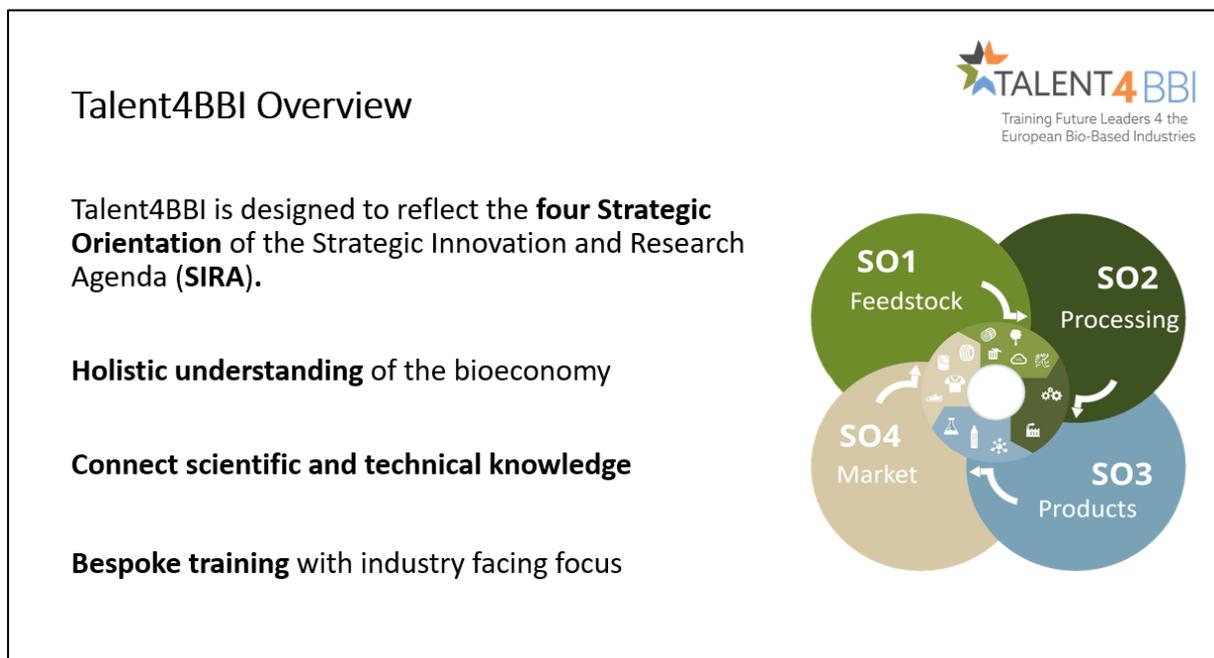


Fig.1 Talent4BBI Overview

2.2 Talent4BBI Industry and Academic Partners

The Talent4BBI partners bring a wealth of experience as past coordinators of 8 MSCA COFUND projects and 65 MSCA ITN programmes.

Each academic partner has purpose-built research laboratories where ESRs will have access to equipment and leverage the knowledge of leading bioeconomy researchers. The industrial partners have world-class research lab facilities and are leaders in their fields –Sappi Global are a leading sustainable Woodfibre producer; Corbion is the global market leader in lactic acid and its derivatives. In 2018 and 2019, Glanbia won a Grad Ireland recruitment award for ‘Best Graduate Training and Development Programme’. In 2018, Corbion won best ‘Learning Organization’ at the AWWN (Dutch employers association)

Talent4BBI will also leverage the expertise of biotechnology leaders Biopolis, Novamont and key EU bioeconomy consortium BIC as training partners. Talent4BBI’s academic institutions are all in the top 200 universities in the world, according to the QS ranking body 2021. Four universities (Leuven, EPFL, Wageningen, Groningen) are in the top 100 in the Times Higher Education 2021 rankings. Chalmers maintains the highest reputation in Sweden. In 2019, Wageningen University secured first place in the QS subject rankings for “Agriculture and Forestry” for the fourth consecutive year; BiOrbic Bioeconomy Research Centre is Ireland’s national centre for bioeconomy research; and the Blank Lab in Aachen is an innovator in the use of microbes for the benefit of the environment, society and the economy.

Talent4BBI is hosted by the BiOrbic SFI bioeconomy research centre based at University College, Dublin, Ireland. BiOrbic is a national collaboration of over 100+ researchers, focused on the development of a sustainable circular bioeconomy. BiOrbic also leads on a number of flagship programmes to address key challenges for a sustainable future. Further information [here](#).



Fig.2 Talent4BBI Partners



3 Application Process for ESR Positions

3.1 Eligibility Criteria

All applicants to the programme must meet the eligibility criteria at the closing date of the call – **January 31st, 2022.** Candidates who wish to apply should be final year undergraduate or should be Master's students undertaking programmes in science, engineering and bioeconomy who wish to work in industry or perform industry- related research. Research assistants currently in academia and industry are also eligible to apply.

All applicants must be in the first four years (full- time equivalent research experience) of their research careers and have not been awarded a doctoral degree, as per MSCA COFUND ESR definition on page 4 of this [document](#). Applicants of any nationality are invited to apply provided they fulfil the MSCA mobility requirement.

1. May be of any **Nationality**
2. The applicants should ***be in the first 4 years of their research careers*** (full time equivalent research experience), possess a degree that entitles them to start PhD studies and have not yet been awarded a doctoral degree at the deadline of the Talent4BBI programme call
3. Mobility Rule - applicants must ***meet the mobility rule*** i.e., they may not have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in the country of the host organisation for more than 12 months in the 3 years immediately before the deadline of the Talent4BBI programme call (as per [MSCA definition](#))
4. The applicant must satisfy academic entry and English language requirements of academic institution they wish to enroll in. Please note an applicant must hold a MSc if the host university requires it.

3.2 How to Apply

All applications must be submitted via the [online submission portal](#) before or on the call deadline of January 31st, 2022, at 18:00 CET. Late applications will not be accepted. Please do **not** send your application to the email address of the listed academic and Talent4BBI supervisors. Only complete applications received via the official application procedure outlined below will be considered for evaluation.



Fig 3.- Talent4BBI submission portal registration page <https://talent4bbi.grantplatform.com/>

Talent4BBI is based on individual-driven mobility and all applicants will be able to freely choose the ESR project most fitting to their individual career aspirations. **Candidates can apply for up to 3 projects.** The ESRs will have a choice of **11 projects** overall (co-designed by industry and academic hosts; suitability confirmed by the programme coordinator(PC). If a candidate **wishes to apply for multiple projects, they must make an individual application for each project.** Each application will be evaluated independently (of the other applications from the same applicant). Evaluators will not be informed if a candidate has applied to multiple projects.

All applications must contain the following **5** mandatory elements. Uploads and submission will be done via the submission portal and all qualifications will be checked.

1. **CV** based on template illustrated below.

Element 1 of the application: CV
Personal details: name, address, contact email
Academic Qualifications: undergraduate (institution name, qualification type and name, grade point average) Additional Information: (e.g., Project Title, Area of Study, etc.) (200 words)
Academic Qualifications: postgraduate (institution name, qualification type and name, grade point average) Additional Information: (e.g., Project Title, Area of Study, etc.) (200 words)
Other education: Please include any additional information relevant to your academic background (e.g., training courses, please provide name, location and dates etc.). (200 words)
Research Outputs: Please list up to 10 publications and/or presentations and detail your contribution to each item (max 50 words each)
Any other relevant info on your achievements including (voluntary) work experience (200 words).

2. **Letter of Motivation** - Letter outlining the applicant’s motivation (LoM) and alignment with the Talent4BBI programme. To ensure transparency the LoM must include key elements listed below.

Element 2 of the application: Letter of Motivation (LoM): fit with Talent4BBI programme and project (300 words per section)
1) Please detail your research experience to date that demonstrates your ability to complete a PhD
2) Please detail how you meet the specific requirements of the research project outlined in research project description
3) Discuss any achievements that demonstrate independent thinking and initiative
4) What specific career development objectives will you achieve through completing this project?

3. **Online questionnaire** confirming applicant meets eligibility criteria (via submission portal)

I confirm that I meet the eligibility criteria for this position

MSCA Mobility Rule
 Research Career Criteria
 Academic Entry and English Language Requirement
 Ethics Commitment

Fig 4. Screenshot for online eligibility question submission portal.

4. **English Language Requirement** - Evidence that the applicant satisfies the English language criteria for the academic institution they wish to enrol e.g., certificate uploaded via portal.
5. **Ethics** – confirmation to commit to following the H2020 ethical principles and guidelines integrity as set out in Horizon 2020 documentation, the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and the European Commission document “Ethics for Researchers” (European Union, 2013).

3.3 ESR Positions

All of the 11 ESR positions are listed on the website and can be accessed by clicking [this link](#) and scrolling down to the ESR PhD positions at the bottom of the page.

3.4 Terms and Conditions of Employment

In all cases, appointment conditions of ESRs will be in line with national labour laws of the country of the recruiting host organisation. All ESRs will be provided with an **employment contract** by the recruiting institution, detailing statutory working practices, social security coverage and social benefits, including their salary, maximum number of working hours per week, annual leave entitlements, contract duration, with **social security coverage** (including sickness, maternity, paternity and parental leave, unemployment and invalidity benefits, pension rights, benefits in respect of accidents at work and occupational diseases).



Talent4BBI will provide four years of funding. Each ESR will receive an annual gross salary within a range from €32,508 - €39,399 (depending on ESR country location – see [Annex 1](#)). A family allowance of €500 per person month will be paid to ESR's with family. Family allowance eligibility will be confirmed at application stage utilising definitions and criteria as outlined in the MSCA Individual Fellowships Terms and Conditions as follows.

A family allowance will be paid in case the researcher has family obligations. In this context, family is defined as persons linked to the researcher:

- 1) by marriage,
- 2) by a relationship with equivalent status to a marriage recognised by the legislation of the country or region where this relationship was formalised
- 3) as dependent children who are actually being maintained by the researcher

This allowance, regardless of the family size, amounts to EUR 500 per month. The family status of a researcher will be determined at the call deadline date.

Important notice on mobility and family allowances: The mobility and family allowances are fixed amounts, regardless of the country of recruitment, and are subject to the tax laws of the country of recruitment. Additional expenses for research training and networking will also be allocated. Support for ESR's with disabilities to apply for the MSCA special needs allowance is also provided.

3.5 Research, Training and Networking Events

Intersectorality is at the core of the Talent4BBI programme, with each ESR benefitting from academic and industry supervision. **Each ESR will spend a specific minimum time in each sector**, according to the needs of their project, exposing them to expert knowledge and cutting-edge research within industry and academia.

All ESRs are required to undertake training in project management, ethics (mandatory), lab safety, gender in research, research integrity (mandatory) and open science (provided by all our partner academic institutions).

In addition to locally offered training, ESRs will also benefit from transferable skills training events organized by Talent4BBI. The training events (**Summer and Winter Schools**) will focus on **business case feasibility, creating, leading, organizing effective teams, project management, time management & personal efficiency, career planning, and leadership**, Sustainable biomass supply, Life cycle analysis, Markets and regulation, Technology scale up.

A schedule for Summer and Winter school training is detailed below.



Annual Summer School -5-day Event <i>(some aspects may be subject to change)</i>				
	PhD Year 1 (2022) <i>Welcome Event</i>	PhD Year 2 (2023)	PhD Year 3 (2024)	PhD Year 4 (2025)
Focus Subject	SO1 Biomass supply, Life Cycle Assessment. Intro to Career Planning and CDP preparation BFL: Biomass & Natural Capital Concept	SO4 Markets, Future Regulation BFL: biodiversity & biomass resilience	SO2 and SO3 Product formulation, characterization, Scale-up BFL: Biomass supply: soil, climate adaptation & mitigation	Business case building, Innovation, IP. BFL: Biomass in the circular bioeconomy (CO ₂ circularity)
Location	Ireland	Italy	Spain	Ireland
Industry Visit	AgriChemWhey pilot plant [Glanbia]	Novamont [Novara HQ and research labs]	Biopolis [Paternal facility]	BioConnect Innovation Centre18
Host	UCD - BiOrbic	Novamont	Biopolis	UCD - BiOrbic
Trainers	BiOrbic LCA leaders [Prof N Holden, Dr F Murphy] UCD Postgraduate Careers Advisor [G Lardner]	Novamont R+D Leaders [F degli Innocenti, M Dani, L Capuzzi, T Milizia]	Biopolis [D Ramón Vidal]	NovaUCD [S Factor], UCD Innovation Academy [A Morgan]

Fig. 5 - Winter School Schedule

Annual Winter 2-day Interactive Event <i>(Some aspects may be subject to change)</i>			
	PhD Year 2 (Jan 2023)	PhD Year 3 (Jan 2024)	PhD Year 4 (Jan 2025)
Focus subject	Business Case feasibility (1.5 days). Public Engagement, use of media to contribute to public debate (0.5 days)	Project Management, Personal efficiency, Creating Teams, Organisational Cultures	Virtual summit: career planning and leadership, remote team working
Location	Spain	Belgium	Virtual Event
Host	Biopolis	Bio-Based Industries Consortium	Corbion
Talent4BBI Trainers	Biopolis R+D team, BiOrbic Public Engagement Manager (A Mathieson)	BIC Exec Director Dr D Carrez, BIC team	Corbion R+D team members

Fig 6. Summer School Schedule

3.6 Career Development Plan (CDP)

Each ESR will set up a CDP in consultation with their supervisors within the first 2 months of ESR start date. Together, the ESR and supervisors will conduct an analysis of the ESR's career objectives and the skills they need to reach these objectives (training needs analysis). A bespoke training plan will be designed to incorporate the relevant research and training activities. The CDP will include all relevant



training (including training offered by Talent4BBI), 'on-the-job' experience, supervision, and secondment arrangements.

The CDP will pay special attention to acquirement of transferable skills necessary for ESR's career advancement. Compulsory sections will be:

- (1) **Training Plan:** created based on expertise in research, specific needs, and the Talent4BBI training programme and including formal education (modules etc.), acquired skills and developed expertise
- (2) **Professional Development Plan:** including research skills and awareness, personal effectiveness, and development, team-working and leadership, career management, communication skills, and entrepreneurship and innovation.
- (3) **Activities Record:** all development activities will be formally recorded and tracked throughout.

4 Selection and Evaluation Process

4.1 Selection Process

The Talent4BBI selection process contains 3 key stages as follows:

1. **Eligibility Checks** - these will be conducted after the closing date and only fully admissible applications from eligible applicants on the online system will progress to the remote independent expert review. The Talent4BBI internal management team will prepare a list of all eligible applications to be sent to external panel of independent experts.
2. **External Remote Independent Expert Review** - Each eligible application will be remotely evaluated by 3 evaluators with at least one evaluator from either academia/non-academia and at least one of either gender. Each evaluator will prepare an individual evaluation report with brief comments and scores as feedback on every application they evaluate. Applications will then be shortlisted and the 3 top-ranked candidates for each project will be invited to interview.
3. **Interview** - Top-ranked candidates for each project will be interviewed by a local interview panel consisting of an independent expert from outside the partnership, both industry and academic supervisors of the project and a member of Talent4BBI Recruitment Committee (RC) who will act as observer. To ensure accessibility, virtual video conferencing format will be offered for interviews. The top ranked candidate for each project will be offered a position.

4.2 Evaluation Process

A table summary of the evaluation process stage and timelines is outlined below.



E&S Application Process		
1	Call Details	Call Open - November 30th – 2021 Call Close – January 31 st - 2022 All applications via Talent4BBI online portal.
2	Application Submitted	Confirmation of submission via portal
3	Eligibility Check February 2022	<u>Eligible</u> : confirmation of progression to next stage. <u>Ineligible</u> : email outlining the reasons why application has been deemed ineligible
4	Independent expert remote review March 2022	Pass threshold (YES/NO). Invitation to interview if application ranks in the top 3 for a project. If threshold is not passed or the application does not rank among top 3 for a project, candidate will be informed that the application is unsuccessful. Scores and feedback will be given to all applicants.
5	Interview Stage - April 2022	Interviews will take place in person or virtually. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If successful, notification of decision to fund on the condition that candidate provides confirmation on meeting any PhD admissions requirements specific to the projects academic host. • If unsuccessful but passes threshold, confirmation will be given that candidate will be placed on ranked list for the project. • If threshold is not passed, candidate will be informed that the application is unsuccessful. • Scores and feedback will be provided to all candidates interviewed.
6	Funding Offer - May 2022	Issue of funding offer

Fig 7 - Evaluation and Selection Process

ESR's Recruitment Timeline Process										
M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10	M11	M12	M13
Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22
Recruitment Call Open and Applications Assessed						Interviews	ESR's hired, move to hosts. Fellowships commence			
Month 13 - Month 60 - Fellowship Implementation										

Fig 8 – Recruitment Timeline

4.3 Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation scoring is in two stages 1) Remote Review and 2) Interview. To ensure transparent and fair evaluation for all applicants the following criteria will be used at both remote review and interview stage.

Criteria	Sub criteria	Assessed on	Marks
Potential to complete a PhD (1)	1) Academic record 2) Experience in/aptitude for research	CV and LoM	20
Fit with requirements of the specific project (2)	1) Match between existing skills and research area 2) Interest in/aptitude for intersectoral work	CV and LoM	20
Research outputs to date in relation to experience	1) Evidence of written research work (dissertation, publication, thesis, research project) 2) Evidence of presentation of research work in another format (talk, presentation, video, teaching)	CV	20
Evidence of initiative and independent thinking	1) Clear examples of initiative and independent thinking	LoM	20



Clear career development objectives	1) Clarity of objectives during the PhD Evidence of thought as to how the PhD would impact on the applicant's career path	LoM	20
Maximum score available		100	

Fig 9 -Evaluation criteria

4.4 Scoring and Interview

4.4.1 Scoring at Remote Review

3 evaluators independent of the Talent4BBI consortium will review each application awarding 0-20 marks for each criterion (see table above, fig 9). The evaluators will subsequently seek to achieve consensus and provide a consensus score for each applicant on the criteria above, awarding scores up to a maximum of 20 per criterion. **A threshold of 13 applies to each criterion.** The maximum total score for an application is 100. Applicants will then be shortlisted and those that are successful will then advance to the next stage for interview.

4.4.2 Interview Format

Interview by Local Interview Panel. Top-ranked candidates for each project will be interviewed by a local interview panel consisting of an independent expert from outside the partnership, both industry and academic supervisors of the project and a member of Recruitment Committee who will act as observer.

To ensure **accessibility**, videoconferencing format will be offered for interviews. To ensure fairness and objectivity, the interview questions will be consistent for all ESR's, and interviewers will use the scoring system set out in *Fig 7. Evaluation Criteria*. The interview will include a dedicated timeslot for the ESR to ask questions. The interview panel will seek to reach consensus and will provide an overall score and a short feedback report for each interviewee.

The Top-ranked candidate for each project will be offered a position in the programme. Should one candidate be the preferred applicant on a number of projects, they will be asked to choose which project they wish to take up. Applicants will have 5 working days to accept or reject their offer. For the project(s) they do not choose to accept, the highest scoring reserve candidate will be offered funding.

A ranked reserve candidate list will be maintained to mitigate the risk of preferred candidate not being able to commence the programme or leaving the project.

4.4.3 Scoring at Interview

Interviews will either be virtual or in person. Given the current conditions with COVID-19, they will most likely be virtual. Applicants will be notified 2 weeks in advance of their scheduled interview date.

Local interview panels will provide a consensus score for each applicant on the criteria in the table (figure 9) above, awarding scores up to a maximum of 20 per criterion. **A threshold of 13 applies to each criterion.** The maximum total score for an application is 100.

The **final combined** is then calculated by Talent4BBI management team by adding up total scores from remote review and interview stage. The maximum final combined score is 200.



Successful applicants will be informed via email from the Talent4BBI project manager.

4.5 Equal Opportunities

Talent4BBI uphold equality principles by promoting the continued development of policies and practices which do not discriminate on the grounds of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race or refugee status. Talent4BBI will uphold **equality of opportunity for ESRs** and **equality of treatment during the selection process**.

- All applicants to Talent4BBI are treated fairly on the basis of their merits, abilities, qualifications and suitability for appointment and appointment procedures do not discriminate on the basis of criteria which cannot be justified by the demands of the post
- All Talent4BBI ESRs will be trained, appraised, given access to relevant work experience, and otherwise treated on the basis of their relevant merits, qualifications, abilities, and experience.

Talent4BBI will promote a harmonious working environment for participants based on mutual respect among ESRs and supervisors, who will be encouraged to develop their full potential in the interests of the individual and the respective host. Furthermore, Talent4BBI will specifically implement a recruitment process open to all nationalities provided that eligibility criteria are met.

Applicants who have taken breaks from research careers are facilitated by only including periods of active research while assessing eligibility. The online application platform functions across all major desktop, tablet and mobile devices enhancing accessibility for all applicants (including those with special needs and Researchers at Risk). Refugees' participation will be facilitated by accepting their application by regular mail if the use of the online submission system is not possible. Also, during the application phase, the mobility rule will be understood as such that time spent to apply for refugee status will not count as time resident in that country.

The dissemination plans for the call also include measures to target females currently underrepresented as researchers in the industry sectors.

Should participation of any recruited ESR in the programme entail extra expenses due to disability, the PM will work with the individual ESR and their supervisors to apply for appropriate additional resources from the MSCA Special Needs Allowance.

4.6 Appeals and Redress

Appeals Process: Should an applicant feel that there is a shortcoming in the evaluation procedure of their application they can contact the Talent4BBI project manager, [Cathy Quinn](#) with an appeal request. An appeal must be **made within 1 week** of sending out of the communications relating to the specific decision which the applicant wishes to appeal. Appeals must be submitted in writing via email (max 2 A4) by the concerned applicant and must clearly and succinctly set out the grounds for the complaint. The Appeals Board will review procedural appeals, not the experts' scientific and technical opinions or scores. **Only one appeal per application will be considered.**

All appeals will be assessed in confidence by the Appeals Board. Any outcome of Appeals Board review will be final. Should the Appeals Board find the appeal request justified, the outcome will be



dependent on stage of evaluation process (1) application previously deemed ineligible will be included in remote review process; (2) second remote review by 3 different evaluators will be organised; (3) applicant will be re-interviewed by a panel including a member of the Appeals Board if the score of the remote review is in the “interview range”. The programme will only offer contracts when the potential appeal period has passed.

5 Contact Details

Cathy Quinn is the programme coordinator and is the main contact for all enquiries. Specific enquires on the PhD ESR positions should also be sent to the main email - Talent4BBI@biorbic.com and will then be forwarded to the relevant supervisors. An FAQ document will also be published on the website and updated weekly as appropriate.



Fig 10 – Talent4BBI Management Team (MT)

6 GDPR

University College Dublin (UCD) as the host university of the management team will be responsible for managing programme-level data collected and ensuring compliance with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). All Talent4BBI partner hosting institutions have Data processing procedures in place with regards to the protection of personal data. Personal data for this stage will be provided by the ESR in agreement with the data processing procedures relating to the protection of personal data of the host institutions. Personal data used in the Talent4BBI programme will be stored securely for the specific purposes and duration of the programme. After this specified purpose ends personal data collected will be destroyed in compliance with GDPR Guidelines. The online application system Talent4BBI will use (GoodGrants) is GDPR compliant. No personal data will be shared outside the European Union.

7 Annex 1 - MSCA Country Coefficient - Salary Breakdown

MSCA Country Coefficient Rates- ESR Salary		
Country	Coefficient	Annual Salary
Spain	100%	€32,508.00
Italy	104.4%	€33,938.35
Austria	106.7%	€34,686.04
Netherlands	107.9%	€35,076.13
Netherlands	107.9%	€35,076.13
Ireland	115.6%	€37,579.25
Ireland	115.6%	€37,579.25
Ireland	115.6%	€37,579.25
Switzerland	121.2%	€39,399.70

Fig 11. Coefficient Rates Breakdown

