



Success Story

COFUND Programme for the Career Vision

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Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions | Developing Talents, Advancing Research

Marie Jones is a PhD student enrolled in the COFUND programme organised by the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) under the name EPFLglobaLeaders. The PhD students in this cohort all work on projects related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); they have various scientific backgrounds and are from different laboratories.

Marie is affiliated with two laboratories at EPFL: one in the EnergyPolis in Sion and the other on the main campus in Lausanne.



How did you learn about the COFUND programme and why did you apply?

As I was looking for a PhD opportunity in Lausanne, I came across the advertisement for the COFUND programme, which appealed to me instantly. Indeed, for many years I have dreamed of becoming a scientific advisor on sustainable development issues at the European Union, and this programme was just perfect for my career vision. Furthermore, I believe that pursuing a PhD with a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) programme is another mark of distinction.

What aspects of the COFUND programme do you appreciate the most?

It is a great opportunity to mingle with students from highly diverse scientific fields and with different backgrounds.

Another major aspect of the programme is the training. Over the years, we complement our core technical skills thanks to courses on soft skills or courses related to business and/or the economy. Through the COFUND programme, we develop both a deep understanding of our research topic and a consideration of the big picture, the global challenges. I greatly value this opportunity as well as the chance to be part of a team.

What is the greatest benefit of participating in a programme with people from different backgrounds?

We all have the common goal to provide answers to global problems.

Also, networking in an international team fosters deep and interesting discussions that have an impact on me as a scientist and as a person.

How does participating in the COFUND programme work on a practical level?

Most COFUND fellows have 2 supervisors, which is not that surprising since our work is interdisciplinary.

In my case, one supervisor focuses on experimental chemistry and biomass, while the other is a specialist in process modelling and energy system optimisation.

Furthermore, all PhD students in the EPFLglobaLeaders programme work with an industrial partner; that is our research is rather applied and practice-based, which I appreciate. It helps me keep in mind the contribution that my work will ultimately provide for large-scale projects. Also, it is rewarding to see some of my ideas put into practice.

How do you manage to coordinate the work with 3 partners?

The coordination between these 3 partners is challenging, but it teaches me valuable soft skills and I also learned to combine the best from what they have to offer.

Industry is quite a different world; the atmosphere is mostly supportive but when commercial deadlines are approaching, I feel much more pressure than in academia.

That is why I have an external PhD mentor. With her, I have the opportunity to talk about work-life balance and professional development.

Mobility is a key feature in MSCA. Where do you see the benefit and the challenges?

I think the big challenge is the distance from the social support network like friends and family. Going into a new environment requires a lot of energy and

it becomes more difficult as I get older.

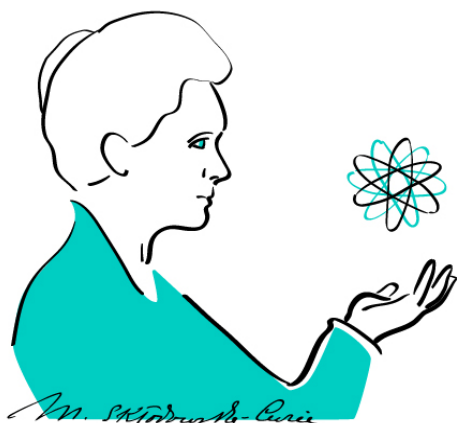
I also feel that as an Erasmus student it was easier to make new friends but now as a PhD student, I had to be more proactive to connect with others.

Nevertheless, I like to travel, and the benefit of mobility is to meet new people bringing you their vision of life. I believe this helps you to develop throughout your life.

„Pursuing a PhD with a MSCA Programme is another mark of distinction.“ (Marie Jones)

Marie Jones was born and raised in France to a French mother and an Australian father; she studied in the UK, went to Switzerland for 10 months as an Erasmus student and also had an internship in Austria. In short: she is a globetrotter!

Her greatest non-scientific interest is the policy-making process to make society fairer. She has also become more concerned about the climate crisis and participated in Friday for Climate actions whilst studying in London. In her current project, she works at the interphase between academic research and industry, aiming at accelerating the transition of the chemical industry to greener and more sustainable processes.



Programme

The **Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA)** support researchers at all stages of their careers. Researchers working across all disciplines are eligible for funding. The MSCA also support cooperation between industry and academia and provide innovative training to enhance employability and career development.

MSCA COFUND co-finances new or existing doctoral programmes and postdoctoral fellowship schemes in any discipline at a national, regional or international level with the aim to spread the best practices of the MSCA such as excellent training, supervision and working conditions.

Euresearch is an information and advisory service on the European Research and Innovation Framework Programmes. It has offices in all the Swiss regions and a Network Office in Bern. Euresearch is a non-profit organisation funded by the Swiss Confederation.

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Illustrations: Alexandra Rosakis

