



SIP/IRS Research Fellowship **2024**

Rules & Regulations

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1. General description and eligibility Criteria

1.1 AIMS

SIP/IRS is funding a Research Fellowship programs with an unrestricted educational grant of €32.000 with the aims of:

- a) Promoting science, research and training techniques in research, in the field of respiratory medicine and science in Europe and particularly on:
 - i. Small airway disease in chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases
 - ii. Lung cancer screening
 - iii. Innovation in inhalers
 - iv. Environment and lung health
- b) Supporting the exchange in Europe of postgraduate scientists/investigators, clinicians and allied healthcare professionals actively involved in respiratory medicine;
- c) Stimulating Fellows' career development in the area of respiratory research and practice;
- d) Contributing to the transfer and implementation of new research techniques or methodologies in Europe and internationally;
- e) Supporting new capacity and knowledge building in European and non-European countries who have a scientific gap (clinical and scientific)
- f) Fellowships are funded by SIP/IRS with the objectives of enabling scientists, investigators, clinicians and allied healthcare professionals in the early-stages of their research career, to carry out basic, translational or clinical research projects and to develop, acquire and apply new skills, advanced research procedures and techniques in the area of respiratory medicine. At the current level of funding, the SIP/IRS Scientific Committee selects **4 grants annually**.
- g) SIP/IRS Research Fellowships are established to advance respiratory medicine and science by helping scientists, clinicians and allied health care professionals to visit another research laboratory or clinical unit in a different country with the aim of learning and applying a (research) technique not available in the Home Institute. The project may involve basic experimental studies, clinical investigations, epidemiology or any other research area with relevance to respiratory medicine.
- h) SIP/IRS Research Fellowships are intended to foster basic and advanced research as well as to support applications which are presented as a training component of a central and robust research project (e.g. apply advanced research, test a hypothesis in a pilot study, participate in a clinical trial, innovate a clinical technique, set up methods to be applied for clinical research at the Home Institute)



- i) SIP/IRS Research Fellowships schemes offer the opportunity for the exchange of a candidate between two groups, from a Home Unit of origin to a receiving Host Unit, collaborating with an individual research project which is to be carried out in a hosting centre located in a different country in Europe. Therefore when applying, applications must already involve an agreement with the Host Unit.
- j) SIP/IRS fellowships are granted to perform research, to improve research skills, techniques and developments. **Their duration is about 4 months**
- k) SIP/IRS fellowships are not granted for undergraduate studies, workshops, courses, lectures, meetings, conferences, congresses or for visiting institutions without a clear research project to be completed.
- l) SIP/IRS fellowships are not granted for clinical and educational training purposes (clinical diagnostic procedures, therapeutic interventional procedures, treatment, etc.). Therefore, the project should include major “research components”

1.2 Recipient's profile

Qualification and experience:

- a) Candidates should be actively engaged in respiratory research/science/practice that is relevant to respiratory medicine; they must possess appropriate scientific, medical and/or professional qualifications and experience according to the specific Fellowship project applied for.
- b) Applicants must be postgraduates holding a university degree in any field related to respiratory medicine (MD, MSc, PhD, MD-PhD). As a minimum requirement, applicants need to have graduated with an MD, MSc or equivalent at the time of application.
- c) Postgraduate scientists active in any field related to respiratory science such as immunologists, biologists, geneticists, pharmacologists, biophysicists, chemists, etc. involved in respiratory science, are entitled to apply for an SIP/IRS Research Fellowships. As a minimum requirement, applicants should hold a university degree and have graduated with an MSc or equivalent at the time of application.
- d) Applicants who are qualified healthcare professionals (non-MD) working in respiratory health/medicine (nurses, physiotherapists, respiratory function technologists, allied respiratory professionals, etc.) are entitled to apply for an SIP/IRS Fellowship. As a minimum requirement, applicants need to have graduated with an MSc or equivalent at the time of application.
- e) Candidates must have adequate fluency in a language that permits effective communication at the Host Institute.



Age:

- a) The SIP/IRS Research fellowship applies an upper-age limit of 40 years on candidates.

SIP/IRS/ERS Joint Membership:

- a) Candidates must have a SIP/IRS membership when applying for a SIP/IRS Research fellowship

1.3 Mobility scheme

The Host Supervisor must be based in a foreign Country other than the candidate's own. Mobility is crucial, as SIP/IRS research fellowships aim at promoting knowledge's exchange between countries. Exchanges between two units within the same country are not allowed unless with a strong mobility justification (**i.e. distance factor**). SIP/IRS will make a decision on a case by case basis.

Candidates should not have been already at the Host Institute for more than 6 months at the time of application. Candidates in this situation will be judged more severely to ensure that their experience will benefit the Home Unit (mobility component). **SIP/IRS** fellowships should not be used to extend a previous stay at the same Host Unit or in the same Host Country but rather serve as an opportunity to learn new techniques in a new environment useful for developing competences and career.

Similarly, candidates already at the Host Institute for less than 6 months, applying for the same Host Institute (extension, continuation) will be considered as long as the fellowship is intended to support exchange (mobility component). The return of the Fellow to the Home Institution at the end of the **SIP/IRS** is mandatory.



1.4 Return to home institute

- a) SIP/IRS will accept applications pending that the technical research competences to be acquired at the Host Institute are not available in the Home Institute.
- b) On completion of the fellowship, the return of the Fellow to the Home Institute is encouraged in most fellowships (see section 2 for exceptions). The goal is to transfer and apply the acquired skills in the home country/unit to develop greater competencies for handling respiratory diseases, and to ultimately alleviate respiratory suffering.
- c) Candidates with clear formal connection/link to their Home Institute where they will return to upon completion of their fellowship, will be prioritized. This connection (previous employment, scholarship, studentship or other) should be testified in the Home Supervisor Release Form.
- d) It is a pre-requisite for applicants to produce a robust research plan back Home (project details & workplan) which shall be detailed in the project description section.
- e) The Home Supervisor should confirm that facilities, funds and resources will be available to the Fellow upon return, in order to continue or disseminate the work initiated during the fellowship, at the home level. This statement will be captured into the Home Supervisor Release Form.

1.5 Selection of the host institute

- a) All applications must involve a Home Institute of origin and a receiving Host Institute. When applying, the applications must already involve an agreement with the hosting/receiving Institute where the fellowship will be carried out. A fellowship project should normally specify only one Institute as Host Unit and only one project title.
- b) It is the responsibility of the Fellow to find a Host Supervisor willing to Host him/her and to find an adequate project description
- c) Awards are conditional on the availability of appropriate facilities, resources and funds to carry out the research project at the Host Unit.
- d) The quality of the selected Host Institute and its adequacy in relation to the suggested research project are important criteria which will be assessed by SIP/IRS during the reviewing and selection procedure of applications.
- e) The proposal should elaborate on how the partnership between the Host and the candidate would take full advantage of the unique facilities, resources, and



- materials available in their respective Host and Home Units. It should also be indicated how the new techniques will be relevant to the career of the applicant and to research in respiratory medicine, and if a return is planned, the projected value/benefits for the Home Institute. The initiation or development of collaborative projects between the Host and Home Institutes are encouraged.
- f) The project description needs to be worked out with the contribution of all three parties involved (applicant, Home Supervisor, Host Supervisor). In order to ensure that the application carries the endorsement of the Home/Host Supervisor, the latter will need to provide their CV (including supporting grants) and publication list as indicated in the mandatory application files. A statement of the Host Supervisors' interest in the candidate and confirmation that he/she is qualified to carry out the project will be requested.
 - g) SIP/IRS Fellows are encouraged to engage in teaching, discussion and similar activities of the institution they visit. They may not, however, engage in any paid or salaried activities, which are not related to the SIP/IRS research project, during the course of their fellowship.

1.6 Time constraints

Start date:

- a) The start date of the fellowship cannot be set earlier than **MARCH 2024**
- b) The start date should allow for sufficient time after the expected date of the funding decision for the Fellow to complete travel, visa, passport and housing formalities.
- c) Fellowships are not granted in retrospect for already fully or partly carried out projects.

Length of Fellowship:

- a) SIP/IRS Research Fellowships are intended for work periods of **4 months** in a foreign European or International country.
- b) The research project outlined in the fellowship is to be carried out in a continuous time period and may not be split nor reduced.
- c) It is critical that the research project plan is realistic, feasible and achievable within the planned time frame.
- d) SIP/IRS Scientific Committee reserves the right to reduce this period depending on the content of the submitted project.
- e) The fellowship is to be carried out in a full time basis (100% working time appointment at the Host Unit dedicated to work on the suggested fellowship



research project). The Fellows may not be engaged in any paid or salaried activities other than those related to the SIP/IRS research project during the course of their fellowship.

Postponement of start date or modification of duration:

- a) The fellowship should be started within 1 year from the positive notification date at the latest.
- b) Once the duration has been agreed between the Host and the Home Institute (set in the application documents), it should normally not be changed without approval of the SIP/IRS; indeed the outlined project may not be amended once the applications are submitted. If any reduction is accepted by SIP/IRS, the grant amount to the Fellow will be reduced accordingly.

1.7 Requirements for Host Institute

Host Institute will be requested to ensure the fulfillment of both practical and scientific aspects which are relevant in the beginning (housing, safety), during the completion (regular meetings, evaluations) and at the end of the fellowship (please refer to section 5).

- a) The Host Supervisor will be required, before the beginning of the project, to confirm in writing through a form provided by SIP/IRS that he/she is prepared to receive the Fellow and to provide the necessary facilities to carry out the research. Written confirmation by the Host should include a starting date of the fellowship, and a confirmation of the Host Institute's responsibilities which include availability of laboratory and office space; ability to conduct the projected research; and verification that health & safety issues are taken care of. The Host will also be asked to assist the Fellow in housing and other practical issues (e.g. he/she will be directed to the university's housing department).
- b) An important aspect of this written confirmation will be that the Host is requested to assign named persons as scientific and administrative mentors for the Fellow. The first one being responsible for the scientific part of the Fellow's project, whereas the second mentor will be responsible for coaching the Fellow in all matters related to visa requirements, registration with the university, opening a bank account, housing, taxation issues, finding appropriate schools for the Fellow's children, etc.
- c) The Host Supervisor will be entitled to accept only one Fellow per round.



1.8 Unexpected event or project change after selection

The implementation of the fellowship (duration, research project, supervision, location, etc.) should be carried out exclusively as outlined in the submitted fellowship application and may not be amended.

- a) Any event or circumstance which might affect the implementation of the fellowship or are likely to have an effect on the performance of the fellowship need to be notified to SIP/IRS at the earliest. Fellowships that are terminated prematurely, must be notified promptly to SIP/IRS and appropriate funds reimbursed.
- b) In case of a problem, the Fellow should report to SIP/IRS, who will contact the Host Supervisor accordingly. If in the mid-term report (see section 5.1) the Fellow indicates unsatisfactory support with regard to supervision, SIP/IRS will contact the Fellow and Host directly to see what may need to be improved. The SIP/IRS Secretariat will follow-up 2 months later by contacting the Fellow and the Host, asking for written confirmation that the matter has been resolved. In extreme circumstances the SIP/IRS may decide to prematurely terminate the fellowship.

Any infringement of the above conditions will result in the withdrawal of an application from the selection process or the cancellation of an award already made



2. Guidelines for completing a SIP/IRS Research Fellowship

2.1 General information on submission

- a) Applications and all supporting documents must be submitted in English in pdf sending an email to SIP-IRS secretariat segreteria@sipirs.it Application must be submitted within February 29th 2024 at 12.00 a.m.**
- b) Applications will be acknowledged in due time.
- c) The allocation of the fellowship grant is based on a complete and detailed project description (including work plan & timelines) and application files to be submitted by the candidate. It is the sole responsibility of the candidate to collect his own documents, the Home's and the Host Supervisors' ones within the above-mentioned deadline
- d) Applications having been previously rejected may be resubmitted; they should where possible be improved.
- e) Official announcement of the awarded submissions will take place within March 2024**
- f) Provision of fellowships will take place after **March 2024**

2.2 Selection process

- a) The fellowship applications will be evaluated by a Scientific Committee made up by the President, the President-elect, the Secretary General and a representative of the Study Group nominated by the President acting on the advice and consent of the SIP/IRS Comitato Esecutivo (Executive Committee),
- b) Funding programmes are under the responsibility of the SIP/IRS Consiglio Direttivo (Executive Council). In order to keep a high standard of applications and quality of the proposed research project, SIP/IRS is strictly enforcing these fellowships management rules.
- c) SIP/IRS award fellowships to applicants based on scientific merit. To achieve this, selection is made after careful and in-depth evaluation of applications by the Scientific Committee.
- d) Applications will go through the Scientific Committee's evaluation process, an in- depth review of the applications and supported documents, with scoring.



Final decision on awarding or not fellowships is taken at the end of the process by the SIP/IRS Scientific Committee and validated by SIP/IRS leadership bodies afterwards

The Scientific Committee will evaluate and grade applications based on the following criteria:

- i. Scientific merit of candidate
- ii. Relevance & innovativeness of the project (originality/innovativeness, relevance to the respiratory field and added value to research, relation to the previous background and relevance to the career development, qualifications, news value)
- iii. Quality of research project (needs, aims, objectives, hypothesis, methodology, workplan with schedule/timelines, deliverables, milestones, realistic timeframe, etc.)
- iv. Quality of Host Supervisor/unit for the project
- v. Quality of Home Unit and research plan upon return (applies only to fellowships with a mandatory return to the Home Unit, or for onsite continuation/extension,): quality of research project/development plan upon return, availability of funds/facilities/resources to implement research developments back, projected value/benefits for the Home Institute, added value and feasibility of the transfer of the newly acquired research skills back, etc.
- vi. The realism and feasibility for achieving the project within the set time period (4 months) is particularly important.
- viii. The Scientific Committee will grade each individual criterion using the following grading:
 - 10 – Excellent, should be automatically funded
 - 9 – Very good, should be funded with highest priority
 - 8 – Very good, should be funded with priority
 - 7 – Good, should be funded with priority
 - 6 – Good, should be funded
 - 5 – Good, could be funded with lesser priority. Put on reserve list
 - 4 – Average, put on the reserve list
 - 3 – Average, probably not funded
 - 2 – Poor, probably not funded
 - 1 – Poor, should not be funded



An average grade for all criteria is calculated, which scores provide the ranking list. The final ranking is then agreed by the Scientific Committee for final endorsement

- h. No distinction will be made between candidates on the basis of gender, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, religious or political beliefs.
- i. The assessments are strictly confidential and cannot be divulged outside SIP/IRS, or to the candidates themselves.
- j. Appeals are not considered unless formal mistakes have been made by SIP/IRS

2.3 Project Description

- a) This is the most important component of the application. It should be prepared by yourself and have the approval of your Home and Host Supervisors, as they will indicate it in their respective forms. It must be written in English language.
- b) Based on the information provided online, an automated abstract will summarize your application and research project.
- c) The project description must not exceed 5 pages (font size 12pts Times Roman or Arial) including references. They should provide details and expand on the factors outlined in the abstract form, and in particular to provide the scientific rationale for the project with key references. It is crucial to provide a clear work-plan with a project duration of 4 months. Likewise, evidence regarding resource and fund availability at the host and Home Units should be provided. .

2.4 Home and Host Supervisors' files

- a) Your Home Supervisor needs to provide SIP/IRS with a signed Release Form confirming the relevance of and the support to your research project, your proficiency in the working language at the proposed Host Institute. Please download the form from the SIP-IRS website, get your Home Supervisor to complete and sign it.
- b) Additionally, a statement by your Home Supervisor is required, informing on your salary status during the fellowship a return to the Home Unit be planned/mandatory, the statement should include an authorisation of leave of absence for the duration of the project, and indicate that, if successful, a position will be open to you upon completion of the fellowship, with facilities, funds and resources available, in order for you to conduct research activities/transfer back



at the Home Unit.

- c) The Home Supervisor will be requested to return the Release Form to you, with supporting documents, which include the statement the Home Supervisor's CV and a list of publications
- d) Your Host Supervisor needs to provide SIP/IRS with a signed Host Supervisor's Acceptance Form, confirming that operational funds, facilities and resources are available for the project. It should also attest the Host Supervisor's commitment to the research project, your salary status during the SIP/IRS research fellowship and provide recommendation for the candidate. Please download the form from SIP-IRS website and send it to your host in order for him/her to complete and sign it.
- e) The Host Supervisor will be requested to return the Acceptance Form to you with supporting documents, which include the Host Supervisor's CV and a list of publications

2.5 Application process and documents

a) Application files to be send to segreteria@sipirs.it:

- 1. Candidate's short curriculum vitae (2 pages maximum)
- 3. Project description (5 pages max) including references
- 4. Form to be filled in with Home Supervisor information, approval of the Fellowship, and documents as required by the form itself
- 5. Form to be filled in with Host Supervisor information, acceptance of the Fellowship and documents as required by the form itself

Compliance with the required length of supporting files is mandatory. Any document longer than the outlined requirements will be truncated at random by SIP/IRS. Applicants are responsible for verifying that the home and Host Supervisors' files are in compliance with the above. If not, applicants either follow-up with the Supervisors and/or truncate/compile the files until compliance is met.

- b) Applicants should be aware that fellowship are awarded based on the quality of information provided, such as a self-written and well-argued research project description, endorsed by both the home and Host Supervisors.
- c) Supporting documents should be downloaded online and sent to the home and Host Supervisors and Referee for completion. Please ensure that all of them complete, sign (mandatory) and return all documents to you in a scanned pdf/jpeg or word format with electronic signature, if possible:

- *Home Supervisor's signed release form + supporting documents.*
- *Host Supervisor's signed acceptance form + supporting documents.*



- d) With reference to the 2.1, point C, SIP/IRS it is again to be stressed the importance of the sole responsibility of the candidate's collection of the application documents both by the Home and Office sources and their relevant submission within deadline



3. Grant Amounts

3.1 Calculation

- a) for 2024, SIP/IRS will award nr. 4 grants for the post of 4 Fellows
- b) The grant amounts are indicated per month in EURO
- c) A fixed amount is calculated by SIP/IRS for the fellowship at the beginning of the research project. SIP/IRS will grant the sum of **8000 EUR for each of the 4 fellowships**
- d) The total SIP/IRS grant amount cover travel (lump sum) and accommodation costs and should be sufficient for living costs during the fellowship. Therefore only subsistence rates are supported by the SIP/IRS grant. The SIP/IRS fellowship does not cover any other expense during the stay at the Host Unit (country).
- e) The fellowship does not provide for the Fellow's family travel costs.
- f) In order to avoid duplication of expenditure, particularly with nationally-funded sources, SIP/IRS requires a full declaration of all other grants, awards and/or contributions applied for and for the same travel and subsistence amounts.
- g) Continuation in whole or in part of existing salary and/or income shall must also be declared at the time of the application. The SIP/IRS will consider this matter separately based on explanations provided by the Fellow. Usually, the SIP/IRS deduct its subsistence amount by the Fellow's corresponding sum of salary/income.
- h) The fellowships may not be financially supplemented by agencies other than the home or Host Institutes, or the Fellows personally. Therefore they may not run concurrently with other awards, funds, grants, fellowships, etc. during the same time period and related project.
- i) The financial supplements that are permitted to Fellows, to be supplied with by home and/or Host Units without deduction on SIP/IRS grant amount; are financial aid to cover the Fellows' obligatory health and safety insurances, legal and social security insurances, pension schemes and child support in home and host country.

3.2 Fellow's responsibility (insurance, taxes, etc.)

- a) SIP/IRS does not recognize recipients of its fellowships as agents or employees of the SIP/IRS and accepts no liability in respect of any of their actions or activities or in respect to the health or safety of their persons. Therefore it is the Fellow's and Host Supervisor's responsibility to find a mutual agreement on the nature, in terms of status, of the Fellow's appointment during the fellowship at



the Host Unit.

- b) SIP/IRS Fellows are not insured by SIP/IRS against medical expenses for themselves or their families; neither are they insured for accidents during their travel to and from the Host Unit.

In their own interests, recipients of the fellowships are, therefore, urged to make sure that they and their families and the institutions which receive them, are fully covered by the necessary insurances. It is the sole responsibility of the recipient of an award to ensure that he/she is covered under a social security scheme providing protection at least equivalent to those of local researchers holding a similar position.

- c) SIP/IRS is an organisation whose awards are not endowed with any particular tax privileges. It is the sole responsibility of the recipient of an award to pay any tax which may be levied upon him/her by the appropriate national authority. SIP/IRS is not responsible for any tax issue that may arise either in the home or in the host country and any taxes have to come out of the fellowship award.

3.3 Substance and travel

Subsistence rates mentioned are indicative and subject to change. The subsistence rates depend on the available yearly SIP/IRS fellowship budget and the variable inflation, exchange rates and the cost of living in the host country.

4. Reporting requirements & SIP/IRS Research Fellowship ending activities

4.1 Fellowship reporting

Within 3 months after the end of the fellowship, both the Fellow and the Host Supervisor are required to submit an administrative end-of-project report.

4.2 Publications

- A) Both the Fellow and Host Supervisor will acknowledge SIP/IRS support in any publication or outcome related to the fellowship.
- B) Both the Fellow and Host Supervisor will record and update the SIP/IRS on any publication activity and other outcome resulting from the fellowship, within 2 months after the publication.

4.3 SIP-IRS Research Fellowship ending activities

- a) A short résumé on the fellowship experience will be requested at the end of



- the project and will be published on the www.sipirs.it
- b) Fellows are encouraged to be involved in SIP/IRS Scientific Program of the National Congress by proposing a research project based on their experience