

SyMeCo

Terms & Conditions

Call 1

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1 INTRODUCTION

The **SyMeCo** (**S**ystems, **M**ethods, **C**ontext) is an innovative research training fellowship programme funding **16 postdoctoral fellowships** of a **2-year duration**. The programme is coordinated by [Lero](#), the Science Foundation Ireland Research Centre for Software, headquartered at the University of Limerick (UL), with partners in other Irish universities and institutes of technology. The initiative is co-funded by the European Commission under the [Marie Skłodowska-Curie programme](#) and [Science Foundation Ireland \(SFI\)](#). The fellows will be recruited via **2 international calls for proposals**. Additional calls may be published for unfilled fellowships.

All fellowships will be based in Ireland. The fellows will be hosted by their supervisor host institution. Applications are welcome from researchers of any nationality who hold a PhD degree and comply with the programme's eligibility criteria.

The **programme aims to provide exceptional training and career development opportunities** to postdoctoral researchers, fostering **international mobility, intersectoral collaboration, and interdisciplinary exposure**.

As a Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellowship programme, SyMeCo offers high-quality professional opportunities to researchers from all walks of life, regardless of their age, nationality, or disciplinary background, as long as they meet the programme's eligibility criteria.

The SyMeCo fellows will have access to all Lero supports in training, industry collaboration, public engagement, and marketing and communications. Fellows will receive discipline-specific and transferable skills training to diversify their employment options. In addition, the fellows will create long-lasting professional networks through collaboration with Lero industry partners and the Lero academic community.

For further details, please see <https://symeco.lero.ie/>

The SyMeCo fellowships is subject to the terms and conditions stipulated in the SyMeCo Grant Agreement (No. 101081459) in respect of the fellowships scheme signed by the Research Executive Agency (REA) under the power delegated by the European Commission and by the University of Limerick.

2 RESEARCH THEMES

There are **3 broad research themes: Systems, Methods, and Context**, as shown in the figure below. Applicants have the freedom to choose their own research project. However, it is important to ensure that the research topic aligns with the programme's research themes and the interests of an eligible supervisor. Before applying, all candidates must discuss their research idea and proposal and seek the support of an eligible supervisor for their application. Please note that **applications without the support of an eligible supervisor will not be considered.**

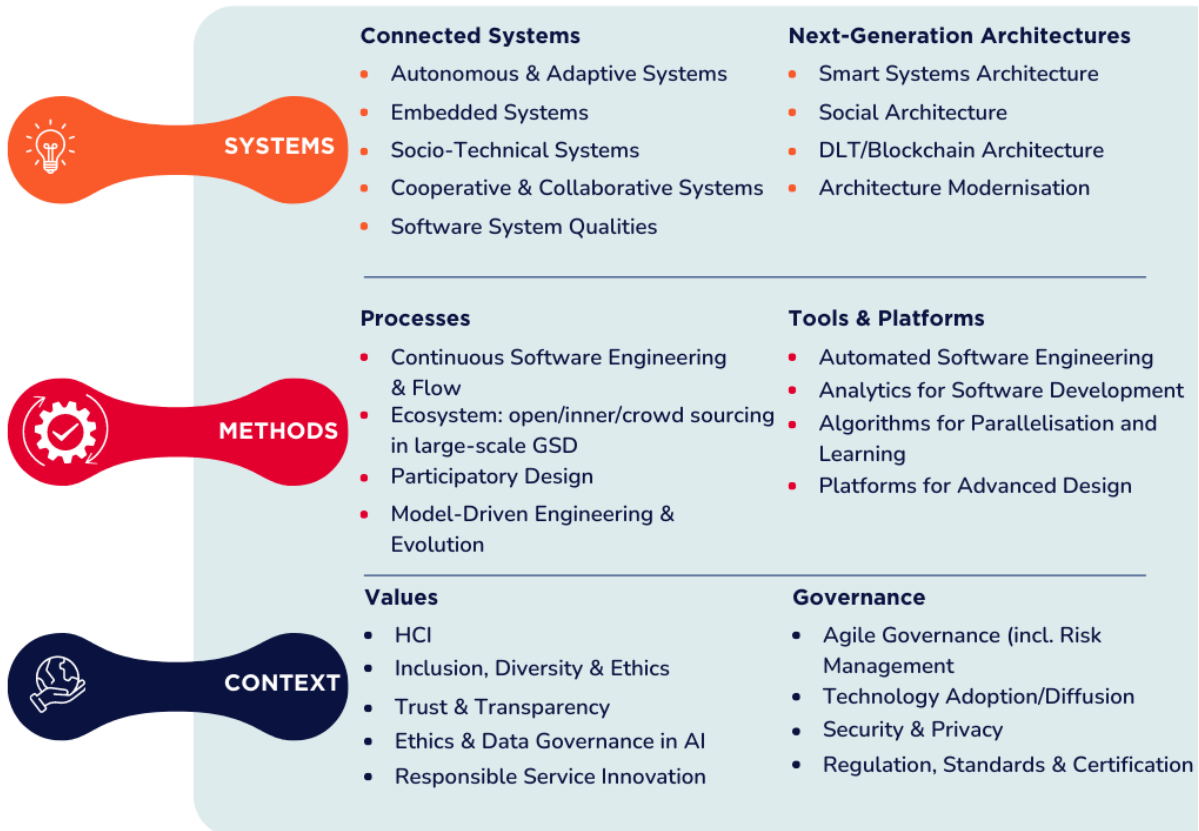


Figure 2:1 SyMeCo research themes

3 APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Applicants may be of any nationality.
- Applicants must be **postdoctoral researchers** as per the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions (MSCA) definition: applicants must have a PhD degree at the call deadline (**3rd of October 2023**). Applicants who have successfully defended their PhD thesis but have not formally been awarded the doctoral degree will also be eligible to apply. The successful defence must take place before the call deadline. Supporting documentation may be requested.
- Applicants must comply with the following mobility rule: they must not have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in Ireland for more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately before the call deadline (**3rd of October 2023**). Compulsory national service and/or short stays, such as holidays, are not considered when assessing mobility compliance. In addition, for applicants who

applied/are applying for refugee status in Ireland, the time spent in that process will not count as a time resident in Ireland.

- Applicants must have working proficiency in English or be fluent in English. Applicants whose first language is not English may be required to provide evidence of their English proficiency.
- Applicants must agree to the programme's Terms and Conditions.

4 APPLYING FOR A FELLOWSHIP

- Before applying, candidates must contact an eligible SyMeCo supervisor to discuss their proposal and gain support for their application. Only applications which received support from an eligible SyMeCo supervisor will be considered. The list of eligible SyMeCo supervisors is available at <https://symeco.lero.ie/supervisors/>.
- Each applicant can only submit 1 application per call.
- Applications must be submitted via the [SyMeCo online application system](#) by the call deadline (**3rd of October 2023, 23:59 GMT**). Applications submitted after the call deadline will not be considered.
- Confirmation of receipt of your application will be sent to the email address entered when registering. If you do not receive an acknowledgement within 2 hours of submitting your application, contact SyMeCo after checking the junk/spam folder in your email.
- Applicants who are at risk/displaced by conflict and might require alternative submission arrangements are encouraged to discuss the support available to them with SyMeCo. In certain circumstances, applications submitted in hard copy may be accepted. However, alternative arrangements must be agreed upon with SyMeCo before the call deadline.
- The application and its documentation must be in English.
- SyMeCo will follow the MSCA 'bottom-up' principle allowing applicants to choose their research project.
- Applicants must submit a research proposal, and the proposal must: be complete and in English and based on the SyMeCo proposal template, describe a research project with an implementation period of 2 years and include a planned secondment period, have received support from an eligible SyMeCo supervisor, align with one of the SyMeCo research themes and the research interests of the proposed supervisor, and adhere to the ethical standards applicable to the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions and the SyMeCo programme.
- Applicants must use the [templates](#) for Part A Administrative Information, Part B – Proposal, Part C – CV and Part D – Ethics Issues Table and Ethics Self-Assessment.
- Only complete applications using the templates provided and supported by eligible SyMeCo supervisors will be assessed. All application sections and the required documentation must be in English, completed and submitted before or on the call deadline.
- By submitting an application, the applicant declares that the information supplied is correct. SyMeCo reserves the right to withdraw any fellowship awarded, or if the employment has commenced, the host institution reserves the right to terminate such employment should any of the information provided in the application be found to be false or misleading.

5 EVALUATION AND SELECTION

In line with the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2021-2022 and the [Charter and Code](#), SyMeCo will promote open, merit-based, transparent recruitment. The SyMeCo programme selection process will also adhere to the recommendations in the Charter and Code.

Applicants may be required to provide evidence of the qualifications listed on their application, proof of identity and any other relevant documentation, such as evidence of compliance with eligibility and mobility requirements. Where the information provided by the applicant is found to be incorrect or cannot be verified if requested, SyMeCo reserves the right to eliminate the candidate from the selection process or withdraw the award.

The figure below gives an overview of the evaluation and selection process.

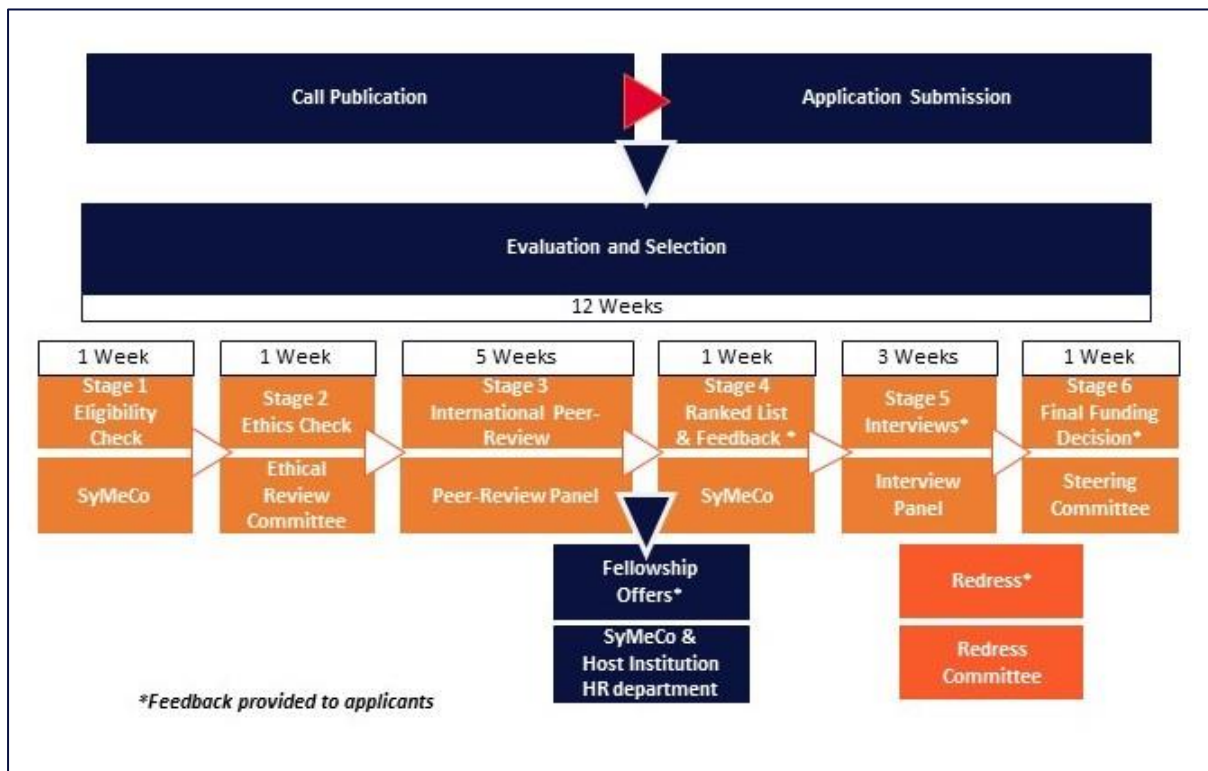


Figure 5:1 Evaluation and selection process overview

There are two scoring stages:

- **International peer review stage:** A panel comprising 3 independent reviewers will evaluate each eligible application.
- **Interview stage:** applicants proceeding to the interview stage must be available to attend the interview on the date requested. The interview may be carried out face-to-face or via video conferencing. No advantage will be conferred to those attending the interview in person. The applicant is responsible for organising the necessary video conferencing facilities at their end. Travel and accommodation expenses will not be provided for those wishing to attend the in-person interview. However, support documentation to enable the applicant to travel may be offered.

5.1 Evaluation criteria

There are **3 evaluation criteria**: Excellence, Impact and Implementation, weighting 50%, 30% and 20%, respectively.

EXCELLENCE (50%) Priority: 1	IMPACT (30%) Priority: 2	IMPLEMENTATION (20%) Priority:3
Quality of the research and its methodology and innovative aspects (the extent to which they are ambitious and go beyond the state of the art)	Potential impact of the fellowship on the researcher's career prospects	Overall coherence and feasibility of the work plans
Clarity of the plans to acquire new knowledge/skills from the host and to transfer knowledge/skills to the host	Expected impact of the research and quality of the plans for dissemination, exploitation and communication	Appropriateness of the risk management plan
Quality and appropriateness of the researcher's professional experience, competencies and skills		
Match between the proposal and the supervisor/research group		

5.2 Proposal scoring

- Eligible applications will be first scored during the International Peer Review Stage. Applications that proceed to the Interview Stage will receive a second score for that stage.
- A score between 0 (very poor) and 5 (excellent) will be provided for each of the three evaluation criteria as a whole.
- The corresponding weighting will be applied to the scores provided.
- The weighted scores for each criterion will be added, producing a final weighted score. After each stage, the maximum final score for a given application will be 5 (excellent).

Full range of possible scores	Description
5	Excellent The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.
4.9 ↕ 4	Very good The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.
3.9 ↕ 3	Good The proposal addresses the criterion well, but some shortcomings are present.
2.9 ↕ 2	Fair The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but significant weaknesses exist.
1.9 ↕ 1	Poor The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
0	Very poor The proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed owing to missing or incomplete information.

Definitions for score descriptors:

- **'Minor shortcoming'** is an issue that relates to a marginal aspect of the proposal with respect to the criterion and/or can be easily rectified (it will not impact the scoring).
- **A 'shortcoming'** is a problem that relates to an important aspect of the proposal. It impacts the scoring but does not render the proposal inappropriate for funding (i.e. the proposal is still expected to lead to useful results with positive impact).
- **A 'significant weakness'** means that the proposal addresses the criterion in a limited and/or not sufficiently effective way. It can also be the case when the proposal includes a large number of shortcomings, which together means that the proposal does not address the criterion sufficiently effectively.

5.3 Thresholds

An **overall threshold of 70% will be applied to the weighted score produced for each proposal**. Therefore, only proposals with a peer review score equal to or higher than 3.5 will proceed to the interview stage. The same threshold will apply to the interview stage.

5.4 Ranking and funding decision

- The final mark for each application will be produced by adding the weighted scores from the international peer review and interview stages with equal weighting leading to a final mark between 0 and 10.
- **Only applications scoring above 7.0 will be considered for funding.**
- The applications will be ranked taking into account the final mark and the prospective supervisor's capacity to take in that applicant.
- Upon a favourable funding decision, applicants will be offered an employment contract for the duration of their fellowship from their supervisor's host institution. The remaining applicants scoring above the threshold will be placed on a waiting list.

5.5 Code of conduct

All individuals involved in the selection process (e.g. reviewers, interview panel members) must agree to the programme's *Code of Conduct* and confirm that no *Conflict of Interest* exists. In cases where a conflict of interest arises, the individual must inform SyMeCo immediately. Actions to be taken may include the removal of the expert from the proposal in question and/or from the entire evaluation process.

By agreeing to the *Code of Conduct*, they commit themselves to conform to the *Charter and Code* principles, be independent, impartial and objective, and act professionally throughout the selection process. Strict confidentiality will be applied. The *Code of Conduct* includes a confidentiality clause stating that under no circumstance may any actor involved in the selection process attempt to contact an applicant of their own accord, either during the evaluation or afterwards.

5.6 Feedback and redress

Feedback will be provided to applicants following each stage of the selection process.

Applicants have a right to redress. Applicants wishing to start the redress procedure should contact SyMeCo within 30 days of receiving the eligibility, peer review, or interview feedback. Redress requests can only be made about procedural issues or perceived incorrect application of eligibility criteria, not the scientific judgments of reviewers/members of the interview panels. If the redress request is accepted, a new remote peer review and/or interview will be arranged. Applicants will be informed about the redress results within 30 days of their request. Decisions from the Redress Committee are binding.

6 FELLOWSHIP OFFERS

The offer to successful applicants will consist of 2 stages:

- Award of the Fellowship by SyMeCo
- An offer of employment by the host institution

The applicant will be required to accept each part of the offer, the award and the employment offer, in writing, within 7 days of receiving each respective notification. Accepting the award at the first stage does not commit the applicant to accept the employment offer from the host institution.

Personal data, in addition to that already supplied during the application, may be required by the host institution to complete the offer of employment. Requests will be made by the host institution under its own data management policies.

Successful applicants are expected to commence the fellowship at the earliest convenience considering any periods required by UL to sign inter-institutional agreements with the host institution and for the successful applicant to gain permission to enter and work in Ireland. A start date will be negotiated with the successful applicant and stated in the offer of employment.

In the unlikely event that the host university cannot support the fellowship and SyMeCo cannot find an alternative eligible host, the fellowship award may be withdrawn. Similarly, the host institution reserves the right to withdraw an offer if the programme is withdrawn for any reason or if the host institution has made an error.

7 EMPLOYMENT AS A SYMECO FELLOW

- The fellows will be employed by their host institution under the same employment conditions as other externally funded researchers employed at that institution. The employment contracts will be in line with Irish Law, and the Terms of Employment (Information) Acts 1994 and 2001. Applicants wishing to know the terms and conditions associated with the employment contracts should contact the host institution directly.
- In addition to the general terms and conditions, the employment contract will include the following: (i) nature of the appointment and fellowship, (ii) start date and total duration of the fellowship, (iii) guarantee that the employment contract with the host organisation will be maintained for the total duration of the fellowship including secondment periods, (iv) name (s) of the supervisors, (v) salary, (vi) annual leave and other leave entitlements (e.g. maternity leave), (vii) Intellectual Property Rights arrangements between organisation (s) and the fellow, (viii) details of grounds and notice periods relating to termination or dismissal.
- The **total gross salary** awarded to fellows will be **€50,124 per annum (without family allowance) and €56,604 per annum (with family allowance)**. SyMeCo will apply family definition as indicated in the [MSCA WP 2021-2022](#): persons linked to the fellow by (i) marriage, or (ii) a relationship with equivalent status to a marriage recognised by the legislation of the country or region where this relationship was formalised, or (iii) dependent children who are actually being maintained by the fellow. Supporting documentation to confirm eligibility for the family allowance may be requested.

- The salaries received will be liable for taxes and/or other deductions which may vary from host institution to institution. Information on Irish taxation can be found on the [Office of Revenue Commissioners website](#). Compliance with Irish law and national regulations on taxation will be a matter for resolution between the fellow, the host institution and the Irish Revenue Commissioners.
- Contributions towards the cost of conducting the fellowship, such as consumables and travel and programme management and training/career development activities, will be provided by the SyMeCo programme.
- The fellow's main duties will be the execution of the research project tasks proposed in their fellowship.

8 ETHICS

- SyMeCo will comply fully with the Horizon Europe ethics policy, including the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights and its supplementary protocols.
- SyMeCo will not fund projects: (i) aiming at human cloning for reproductive purposes, (ii) intending to modify the genetic heritage of human beings which could make such modifications heritable (with the exception of research relating to cancer treatment of the gonads), (iii) intending to create human embryos solely for the purpose of research or for the purpose of stem cell procurement, including by means of somatic cell nuclear transfer, (iv) leading to the destruction of human embryos (for example, for obtaining stem cells).
- Projects involving human embryonic stem cells (hESC) or human embryos (hE) will require approval from the Research Executive Agency (REA) before commencing. Therefore, SyMeCo must inform REA of any research project selected for funding that may involve the use of hESC or hE. Furthermore, such research may not start without approvals from the European ethics review and the relevant Programme Committee.
- Applicants must complete an Ethics Issues Table as part of the application process. In addition, a Programme Ethical Review Committee (PERC) will be set up to review all proposals for which ethical issues are flagged.
- SyMeCo fellows must comply with their host institution's ethical guidelines and obtain formal ethical approval from the host Research Ethics Committee where ethical issues arise. Such approval must be sought before commencing any project activity involving ethical issues. All hosts have strict procedures for ethical approval that align with national ethical regulations and procedures. In addition, the fellows will be required to commit themselves to conducting their research to the highest standards of integrity, as outlined in the [National Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland](#).

9 REPORTING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

- The fellows will report directly to their supervisor. The supervisor will support the fellow in all aspects of their research project, monitoring the progress/milestones of research and access to appropriate facilities and infrastructure. In addition, the supervisor will also identify and introduce the fellow to colleagues and collaborators to broaden the fellow's professional network. An open-door policy will be in place so supervisors are readily accessible to the fellows.

- The fellows will be required to prepare a career development plan supported by the supervisor and SyMeCo. A skills audit will be carried out, considering the fellow's existing and the skills required to ensure the successful completion of the project and career development. The career development plan will be reviewed annually or as required to reflect changes regarding the project or career development goals.
- The fellows will be required to partake in training and career development opportunities such as those organised by SyMeCo and the host institution. In addition, the fellows are also required to participate in Education and Public Engagement activities as well as communication and dissemination activities.
- The fellows will be required to provide progress updates to the SyMeCo Project Manager, including research outputs, training and career development activities and education and public engagement activities completed.

10 FUNDING ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- All publications, presentations or dissemination activities carried out by the fellow which arise from work carried out during their fellowship must acknowledge that the work was co-funded by the European Union using the following wording:

"Co-funded by the European Union. 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. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them".

- In addition to the EU acknowledgement above, all publications, presentations or dissemination activities carried out by the fellow which arise from work carried out during their fellowship must acknowledge that the work was co-funded by SFI:

"This work was supported, in part, by Science Foundation Ireland grant 13/RC/2094_P2 and co-funded under the European Regional Development Fund through the Southern & Eastern Regional Operational Programme to Lero - the Science Foundation Ireland Research Centre for Software (www.lero.ie)" or if space is short ... "supported, in part, by Science Foundation Ireland grant 13/RC/2094_P2".