

Marie Curie Research Training Networks Mid-Term Review guidelines

All Research Training Networks will undergo a Mid-Term Review (MTR) involving the coordinator, the scientists in charge, the currently (and possibly previously) appointed early stage and experienced researchers (ESR/ER), external reviewer (optionally) and the Commission representative(s).

The consortium shall organise a MTR meeting (art. III.2-e of the contract):

The coordinator shall agree with the Commission the date, the venue and the agenda for the meeting at least two months in advance of it.

The Mid-Term Review report forms the basis for discussion at the meeting (art. III.5) and is a supplement to the periodic reports that should also have been submitted before the MTR meeting:

At least one month in advance Mid-Term Review meeting, the coordinator shall submit the Mid-Term Activity report covering the whole period since the project has been started.

The report should be submitted electronically via SESAM (online submission tool of the Commission) according to the Reporting guidance notes available at: <http://www.cordis.lu/mariecurie-actions/rtn/manage.htm>.

Please note in particular that it must be completed by the individual and confidential **mid-term** assessment **questionnaires** to be filled in online by each of the researchers recruited so far by the Network.

Purpose of the Mid-Term Review:

The Mid-Term Review meeting is an opportunity for the network to take stock of progress to date, to explore flexibility in the contract and to clarify many issues (financial, administrative, best working practice, progress with engagement of early-stage and experienced researchers) with the Commission and to subsequently change course if necessary. It is principally an opportunity for the partners, the recruited ESR and ER and the representative(s) of the Commission to discuss questions or issues which may not be clear from the official documentation or the contract. **As such, it is not a scientific evaluation of the Network nor should it be the first point in the course of the contract at which problems are brought to the attention of the Commission.** Particular attention is paid to the training and networking aspects. The structure of the network and the contract's work programme will also be reviewed and, if necessary, contract modifications defined. The Mid-Term Review is a valuable source of feedback to the RTN management.

Main steps in the Mid-Term Review of a Network:

Step 1: Setting the date and venue:

The date and venue of the meeting is fixed by agreement between the network coordinator and the Commission's project officer *as far in advance as is practicable but not less than two months in advance*. Where practicable, **the meeting should be held in Brussels or as close as possible to Brussels**. It is recommended that the Mid-Term Review meeting is held in conjunction with a regular network meeting to avoid additional costs. The venue proposed should be easily accessible to all participants.

Step 2: Agenda and participants:

The agenda (see annex A) and the full list of participants for the review meeting are to be agreed between the coordinator and the Commission's project officer *at least two months* before the meeting. The participants will include the coordinator, the Commission's representative(s), all scientists in charge, task leaders and all ESRs and ERs whose appointments are currently being financed by the Network. A network administrator may also attend. The Commission's representative is normally the project officer. An external expert reviewer may accompany the Commission's representative. In general, other participants should only be present if they have a role to play in the meeting.

ESRs and ERs who have been in the Network but have completed their contracts at the time of the Mid-Term Review may also be invited to share their experiences, at the coordinator's discretion, and at the network's expense.

If other participants are desired, for example interested parties from academia or industry, then the Commission must be consulted beforehand. Given that the focus of the meeting is very different from a scientific meeting, it is not clear that participants external to the network will add value and it is perhaps more appropriate to invite observers only to the network's scientific meetings.

Step 3: The coordinator's Mid-Term Review report:

The network coordinator should prepare a Mid-Term Activity report in addition to the periodic reports (see Annex C or the Reporting guidance notes available at: <http://www.cordis.lu/mariecurie-actions/rtn/manage.htm>). The report must be sent to the Commission electronically via SESAM (online reporting submission tool). The report and the agenda must be distributed to all participants of MTR-meeting *at least one month before* the meeting.

Step 4: The Mid-Term Review Meeting:

The meeting will normally require one whole day or two half-days. It may be chaired by the Commission's representative or by the coordinator (by prior agreement with the Commission representative). The agenda will include a report by the coordinator and, if relevant, a short tour de table of the participants. Each recruited researcher may also be required to make a report of their experiences and will have to fill in a confidential (anonymous) MTR questionnaire (Annex B) for statistical follow-up by the Commission.

Separate sessions may also be held between the Commission's representative and the senior scientists and with the recruited researchers to give each group a chance to air concerns which they may not wish to discuss in front of the group as a whole.

Step 5: Follow-up.

Following the Mid-Term Review meeting, the Commission will issue a letter detailing any recommendations/actions to be taken to implement best-practice, any adjustments to the work programme, training programme etc. A time-scale for the implementation of any changes will also be agreed. If no actions are necessary, the Commission's project officer may conclude the Mid-Term Review process.

Summary of tasks of the principal participants:

❖ **The network coordinator:**

- ◆ To propose a date and venue for the Mid-Term Review meeting as soon as possible and not less than two months in advance.
- ◆ Not less than two months before the agreed date, to propose an agenda (see Annex A) and list of participants to the Commission's project officer.
- ◆ Not less than one month before the meeting, to prepare the online Mid-Term Activity report (see Annex C), attach the sketches of the recruited researchers (see Annex B) and send it to the Commission.
- ◆ To arrange for the recruited researchers to complete the online MTR questionnaire and provide the requested information (see Annex B) not less than two weeks before the meeting and to bring a copy at the meeting.
- ◆ To organise the logistics for the meeting.
- ◆ To chair the Mid-Term Review meeting (by prior agreement with the Commission representative).
- ◆ To present an overview of the network's progress to the meeting.
- ◆ To circulate the Commission's assessment to all Network partners and to arrange for any necessary follow-up.

❖ **The Commission's Project Officer:**

- ◆ To agree the date and venue of the Mid-Term Review meeting with the coordinator.
- ◆ To provide her/him with the Mid-Term Review guidelines.
- ◆ To agree the agenda and the list of participants.
- ◆ To propose and agree with the coordinator on the choice of external expert reviewer (if relevant).

- ◆ To prepare for the meeting by examining the Mid-Term Activity report, the contract and relevant background information, notably the original proposal and the network's home page on the internet. In particular, the progress with the appointment of recruited researchers, networking aspects and the financial performance to date will be examined.
- ◆ To chair the Mid-Term Review meeting (or agree the coordinator to chair it).
- ◆ Within one month following the meeting, to provide the Commission's opinion on the Mid-Term Review to the coordinator. To follow up any actions that may be required in co-operation with the coordinator of the project.

❖ **The External Expert Reviewer (if relevant):**

- ◆ To agree the date of the Mid Term Review meeting
- ◆ To prepare for the meeting by examining the Mid-Term Review report and the contract as well as any other material provided in advance of the meeting and by seeking supplementary information if required.
- ◆ To attend the meeting and be prepared to structure the discussion, involving all participants. To discuss together with the participants area of possible actions to be taken.
- ◆ To prepare the review report and transmit it to the project officer within two weeks following the meeting. Confidential information should be contained in a cover letter.

ANNEX A
Guidelines for the preparation of the agenda of the Mid-Term Review Meeting

AGENDA (one day or two half days)

- 1) **Welcome**
- 2) **Introduction:** There will be a short introduction (10-15 minutes) by the Commission's representative
- 3) **Coordinators report:** A presentation by the coordinator, lasting no more than one hour, of the network and the Mid-Term Review report. The presentation should cover each of the following aspects and equal time should be given to the scientific, networking and training topics:

Scientific (20 minutes)

- i) The scientific, technological or socio-economic reasons for carrying out research in the field covered by the research;
- ii) the research objectives of the joint work;
- iii) scientific highlights of the work so far;

Networking (20 minutes)

- iv) the methodological approach and work plan;
- v) how the network functions and how the partners collaborate in practice; in particular, involvement and interaction among the nodes of the recruited researchers
- vi) connections to other Networks, EC programmes and industry (if any);

Training (20 minutes)

- vii) the training and transfer of knowledge programme (distinguishing between that for ESRs and ERs);
- viii) summary (table) of recruitment and of use of budget to date and projection until the end of the contract

Other issues

- ix) management aspects
- x) any proposed revision to the contract

4) **Further presentations by participants**

- When relevant, more detailed presentations equally reporting on research, networking and training may be planned in particular by the recruited researchers. Particular attention should be given to the training and opportunities to interact with the other nodes and the other ESRs and ERs. Any comments (positive or negative) on the network are also welcomed.

Sufficient time should be built into the agenda to allow for questions and discussion.

- 5) **Meeting between the ESRs/ERs and the Commission's representative (one to two hours):** This meeting is intended to allow the recruited researchers to speak freely with the Commission's representative about their experiences within the Network.
- 6) **Meeting between the coordinator, the scientists in charge and the Commission's representative (approx. one hour):** This meeting is intended to give the senior scientists an opportunity to talk to the Commission's representative about their own experience of the network, of the network fellows and to raise any matters which they wish to discuss in a smaller group.
- 7) **Open discussion (approx. one hour):** This discussion will round off the meeting by identifying strengths and weaknesses of the network, particularly in relation to the training programme and the joint research. Possible revisions to the contract will also be identified and discussed. Identification of best practice in the network and recommendations will be made by the Commission's representative. Comments will be made on the report and the network's web pages will also be made.

ANNEX B

Midterm assessment questionnaire: instructions for the ESRs and ERs

The midterm questionnaire must be filled in at least 2 weeks before the meeting using the **online** SESAM tool

The address is <http://webgate.cec.eu.int/sesam/questurl.do>

You have to select:

- instrument: "MCA - Marie Curie Actions"
- project type: "RTN - Research Training Actions"
- questionnaire type: "**Midterm** Assessment questionnaire" (3rd one)

then click on "Edit questionnaire"

You are asked to enter the contract ID (6 digits: **nnnnnn**).

You can now see the questionnaire.

Because you can't save but only CANCEL or SUBMIT, it is suggested that you first print the questionnaire and then CANCEL: you can prepare your answers on paper (e.g. question of location of origin: is it in a "Less Favoured Region (LFR)"? you may need to first check the list of LFR at

http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/objective1/regions_en.htm).

When all answers are ok, come back to the tool and enter again the online questionnaire to quickly fill in all your answers. Once this is done:

- print the questionnaire as you won't have access to it anymore;
- click on SUBMIT immediately after you have finished.

No acknowledgement of successful submission is given back by the system.

Don't forget to bring a paper copy of the questionnaire at the MTR meeting: the Commission's representative may collect it in case of problem with the SESAM tool.

Please note that the procedure is the same for the "Assessment questionnaire" that you will have to fill in at the end of your stay as ESR or ER in the network.

If you are leaving the network at the time of the midterm meeting, you have to fill in both questionnaires at the same time!

In case of difficulty, please contact the scientist in charge or the network coordinator.

In addition, you should provide the Coordinator of the project with the short information (half page - maximum one page) at least one month before the meeting, as described here after.

Thank you for your collaboration.

Marie Curie web site:

<http://www.cordis.lu/mariecurie-actions/>

Short description written by each ESR and ER

Project acronym: **XXXXXXXX**
 Project ID (6 digits): **nnnnnn**
 Project Participant: Name of Institute, University, Research Centre etc.

You			Your stay in the network				
NAME, first name	Nationality	Previous place of work/education	Start date	Duration (months)	Category ESR/ER	Place	Country

Please provide a short description (half page – maximum one page) of your scientific background (including education and previous employer), of your responsibilities in the Network and of your experiences (positive and negative) to date. You may highlight the most significant opportunities:

- training;
- interaction with other nodes and in particular with other early stage and experienced researchers (“ESR”, “ER”);
- attendance to international conferences;
- research achievements.

*This short information should be sent to Coordinator either by e-mail or by fax **at least one month before the Mid-Term Review meeting**. Please bring also a copy at the meeting: the Commission’s representative may collect it.*

ANNEX C

Midterm assessment report: instruction for the Coordinator
(see also Reporting Guidance Note for MCA RTN at
ftp://ftp.cordis.lu/pub/fp6/docs/reporting_guidelines_rtn2005.pdf)

The Mid Term Activity report

All Research Training Networks will undergo a Mid-Term Review involving the Coordinator, the scientists in charge, the currently (and possibly previously) appointed early stage and experienced researchers and the Commission Representative(s). The Mid-Term Review report forms the basis for discussion at the meeting.

At least one month in advance Mid-Term Review (MTR) meeting, the Coordinator shall submit electronically via SESAM the Mid Term Activity report covering the whole period since the project has been started.

The Mid-Term activity report should be a consolidated text covering the whole period from the beginning of the contract up to the mid-term review point and demonstrating the achievements in relation to the initial objectives.

In reporting on progress with the implementation of its research plan the network should provide information and data with reference to the quantitative and qualitative indicators given in Annex I of the Contract. In particular, the following items should be addressed (if applicable):

Research Activity

Quantitative indicators

- general progress with research activities programmed at individual, participant team and network level
- highlights on more particularly innovative developments (novel concepts, approaches, methods and / or products)
- citation index for individual and joint publications directly related to the work undertaken within the contract
- expected scientific / technological breakthroughs
- overall progress and possible problems encountered with individual work packages and/or network-wide research activities
- nature and justification for adjustments, if any, to the original research work plan and/or timetable
- progress on cross interaction among disciplines represented within the network
- progress on cross interaction between academic and industrial partners
- progress regarding interaction with industrial/commercial/economic interests outside the network
- access to / use of state-of-the-art infrastructure and facilities
- highlights on wider societal and/or ethical components of the project, such as public outreach activities

- highlights on the scientific community recognition of the network research contribution (awards, invitation to conferences, ...)

Qualitative indicators

- general progress with research activities programmed at individual, participant team and network level
- highlights on more particularly innovative developments (novel concepts, approaches, methods and / or products)
- citation index for individual and joint publications directly related to the work undertaken within the contract
- expected scientific / technological breakthroughs
- overall progress and possible problems encountered with individual work packages and/or network-wide research activities
- nature and justification for adjustments, if any, to the original research work plan and/or timetable
- progress on cross interaction among disciplines represented within the network
- progress on cross interaction between academic and industrial partners
- progress regarding interaction with industrial/commercial/economic interests outside the network
- access to / use of state-of-the-art infrastructure and facilities
- highlights on wider societal and/or ethical components of the project, such as public outreach activities
- highlights on the scientific community recognition of the network research contribution (awards, invitation to conferences, ...)

Training and Transfer of Knowledge Activity

Quantitative indicators

- the rate of recruitment of ESR and ER for each participant and for the network as a whole (ratio person-months filled/offered)
- the nature and justification for adjustments, if any, to the original overall number of person-months of ESR and ER as well as to the breakdown of this overall number among the participants (see table contained in Part C)
- the time and duration of each individual appointment. [*Please note that these must be from 3 up to 36 months. Short visits and secondments although part of the training/ToK programme are not counted as appointments, but as part of the networking activities.*]
- the number, names and level of involvement of senior researchers directly associated with the tutoring/supervision of the recruited ESR or ER, at each participant
- the number of ESR that are expected to present their PhD thesis and when
- the number and place of the short visits and secondments, placement in company premises undertaken by each individual ESR or ER either within or outside of the network
- number of visits of the ESR and ER to their home scientific community
- attendance at network meetings by the ESR and ER (number, names, place, date)
- participation in and presentations to workshops and conferences by ESR and ER (number, names, place, date)

- organisation of training events (e.g. schools, training workshop/seminar, hands-on training session on specialised instrument/techniques) at individual participant sites (number, attendees' names, place, date)
- organisation of network-wide training events (number, attendees' names, place, date)
- participation in training events organised outside the network (number, attendees' names, place, date)
- number of internet tutorial and computer based training courses developed/used
- number, place, purpose of any meeting (e.g. workshop) organised by the ESR or ER themselves

Qualitative indicators

- general progress with training and ToK activities programmed at individual, participant team and network level (type of guidance, supervision, coaching or mentoring in place to support ESR and ER)
- highlights on the development of more particularly innovative approaches to training and ToK (e.g. specific training packages of network-wide relevance)
- highlights on the exploitation of the "complementarities" between network participants with respect to training and ToK
- nature and justification for adjustments, if any, to the original training / ToK plan and/or timetable (e.g. opportunities for new collaborations regarding training activities)
- career development plans as elaborated by the ESR and ER involved in the project
- career development opportunities/prospects for ESR and ER involved in the project
- achievements regarding the acquisition of complementary skills such as communication, language skills, computer skills, project management, ethics, team building, etc.
- achievements regarding the training/ToK on specialised instruments/equipment's
- level of satisfaction of the trainees (e.g. as expressed in response to questionnaires)

Management

- effectiveness of the "internal" communication and decision making between the co-ordinator, team leaders, supervisors, down to the ESR and ER, including feedback processes
- effectiveness of the communication between the network and the Commission Services (frequency, efficiency, timely feedback's), particularly regarding the conformance with contractual provisions and the implementation of contingency plans where needed
- effectiveness of network communication with industrial and other stakeholders (anticipation of outcomes and possible end-users interests, contact preparation, follow-up and contractual agreement where appropriate)
- network self-assessment through benchmarking activities (exchange of best practices among participants and/or development of ad hoc performance indicators regarding cost management, staff selection, measurement of research/training/ToK outputs, young researchers' involvement, etc.)
- overall quality and efficiency of the "external" communication strategy of the network (Cordis; personal, team and network web sites updates; newsletters; etc.)
- effectiveness of the recruitment strategy of the network in terms of equal opportunities (including gender balance) and open competition at international level
- development of any specific planning and management tool(s) and databases
- management of intellectual property and commercialisation of network research output

It should be completed by the individual and confidential mid-term assessment questionnaires, to be filled in by each of the researchers recruited so far by the Network (see section 8.2 of this Reporting Guidance note). Please note that the above are considered as a supplement to the periodic (activity and management) reports and that these should therefore also have been submitted to the Commission in advance of the Mid-Term Review meeting.

The Mid-Term Activity report describes the most outstanding or more particularly significant outcome of the work performed during the period covered by this report, in terms of scientific/technological results, research training methodologies, opening up of career opportunities to researchers, international networking of the concerned scientific community, etc.

Any relevant material evidencing this selection of most outstanding/particularly significant results of the project, such as reviewed scientific publications, invited papers, patent descriptions, media coverage, prizes, awards, etc. should be attached as separated annexes.

The Mid-Term Activity report consists of the following major items:

GENERAL INFORMATION

This information is automatically generated when creating the report in SESAM. Coordinator must ensure the correct starting and end dates of the period covered by this report.

SUMMARY OF THE RECRUITMENT SINCE THE START OF THE PROJECT

Coordinator must indicate the summary of the recruitment/training situation as ascertained for each Contractor at the time of the Mid-Term Review meeting (MTR). For each recruited researcher Coordinator must indicate a full-time equivalent months covered by the employment contract of the researcher for the reporting period (from the start date of the project till the MTR-date).

SUMMARY OF THE MAJOR PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE THE START OF THE PROJECT

Describe what you would consider to be the most outstanding or more particularly significant outcome of the work performed during the period covered by this report, in terms of scientific/technological results, research training methodologies, opening up of career opportunities to researchers, international networking of the concerned scientific community, etc.

Please add as a separate annex the sketches of the all researchers recruited so far by the Network. For each of the recruited researchers please provide a maximum one page description of the researcher's scientific background, of his responsibilities in the network and of his experiences (positive and negative) to date. These sketches should be written by the researchers themselves.

Please add also as separated annexes any relevant material evidencing your selection of most outstanding/particularly significant results of the project, such as reviewed scientific publications, invited papers, patent descriptions, media coverage, prizes, awards, etc.

Please also specify any major developments or events that can be considered as having an important impact either

- economical (e.g. Spin-offs, companies)
- social (e.g. media coverage)

DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS OF THE PROJECT

Participation in conferences and other scientific events

Please indicate the attendance of the Conferences, Workshops and other International scientific events by the members of the Network. Only those events should be mentioned where either the results of the project were presented by any members of the Network (active participation) or which were attended by recruited researchers for training purposes (passive participation).

Publications

Please indicate the number of publications resulting directly from the project, specifying the ones which involved recruited researchers. Furthermore, indicate the number of joint publications and the number of invitations for publication received.

List of joint publications

Please list the most important joint publications in the text box bellow and add as separated annex the list of all joint publications resulting directly from the project. Names of the recruited researchers in this list should be indicated in bold.

Patents

Please indicate the number of granted patents and patent applications resulting directly from the project.

MAJOR PROBLEMS/DIFFICULTIES

Please specify any major problems/difficulties you may have encountered until now or may anticipate in the near future, and suggest possible remedial actions at network and/or commission level.

The Mid-Term Activity report must be created and submitted by Coordinator electronically via SESAM. Afterwards it must be printed, signed by Coordinator and sent to the Commission together with all annexes at least one month in advance of Mid-Term Review meeting.