

# Newsletter

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## Celebrating our 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary: Letter from the project coordinator



*EU-Africa PerMed consortium, Cape Town (South Africa), February 2023*

**EU-Africa PerMed** started its journey in February 2021, with the COVID19 pandemic still around, challenging the world and making us more aware of how vulnerable we are and how important it is to collaborate internationally in health and biomedical research. The **EU-Africa PerMed** project, funded by the EC Horizon 2020 programme, made it possible for a group of 13 partners from Africa and Europe to start working together with the aim of strengthening the collaboration between both regions to advance in Personalised Medicine (PM) research, innovation and implementation. A big challenge but also a big responsibility, as the results of our work should have a positive impact, at the end, on improving people's health and wellbeing.

Looking back now at these first two years of the project, as coordinator I cannot be prouder of the group and the work done so far. We have mapped the research and policy landscape of PM in Africa, a study that has given us a better understanding not only of the context and the capacities of African countries in health/biomedical R&I, but also about what is their level of maturity for the implementation of PM within their health systems and what are the opportunities to advance PM in Africa.

The project has identified and engaged with many stakeholders in two workshops and several regional engagement meetings. Together with the mapping work, it has facilitated the identification of areas of mutual interest for collaboration in PM between Africa and Europe. Also, it has enabled a first analysis of the gaps and needs of PM in Africa as well as where collaboration with Europe can have an added value for both regions.

Supporting African organizations to engage with and join the International Consortium for Personalised Medicine (ICPerMed) as means to incorporate Africa in the global PM research agenda is an important objective of EU-Africa PerMed. We can celebrate now that the South African Medical Research Council is now a full member of ICPerMed and a research project coordinated by South Africa has been funded in the last joint call of ERA PerMed. Five webinars and one summer school have been organized by the project so far, not only to increase knowledge in PM but also to share good practices, disseminate standards in PM research and facilitate the interaction of researchers and students from both regions.

**EU-Africa PerMed** has still much more work to do in the coming years, with the aim not only to increase the participation of African countries in ICPerMed, but also to strengthen the EU-AU collaboration in the area of PM and support the EU-AU policy dialogue relevant to research and health. Our objective is to prepare the **EU-Africa PerMed action plan**, a roadmap for facilitating, fostering and promoting the collaboration of Africa and Europe in Personalised Medicine, responding to the main health challenges in Africa, and taking into account the differences between regions and countries in Africa. More capacity building and training activities are planned for the next years, as well as a final engagement with stakeholders in Senegal in June 2024 to present and disseminate the Action Plan.

Personalised Medicine has to be incorporated as an area of relevance in health policies and STI funding programmes so that it reaches and benefits the entire population. **EU-Africa PerMed**, as a collaborative project between Africa and Europe seeks to contribute to make this possible, as well as showing the benefits of international collaboration when it comes to addressing global health issues.

Thank you all for following and supporting us in this mission. Merci à tous de nous suivre et de nous soutenir dans cette mission.

**Erika Sela, EU-Africa PerMed Coordinator**



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## Project highlights

### 2nd EU-Africa PerMed Stakeholder Workshop celebrated in Cape Town, South Africa, 20-21 February 2023



*EU-Africa PerMed stakeholder workshop in Cape Town, South Africa. General view of the meeting.*

The **EU-Africa PerMed** successfully organized its 2<sup>nd</sup> Stakeholder Workshop, on the 20-21 February 2023 in Cape Town, South Africa. Hosted by the South African Medical Research Council, partners of the project, the meeting was a hybrid event that gathered 113 participants from 4 continents- 29 countries, including 23 different African Countries and delegated from Europe, USA, Canada, & Australia.

The workshop, planned as part of the work that the project is doing to explore and analyse the potential and advantages of collaboration in PM between Africa and Europe, provided the opportunity for participants to:

- Review the PM landscape in Africa from various regional outcomes.
- Validate and refine areas of mutual interest between Africa and Europe identified by the project.
- Validating the gaps and needs identified for developing areas of interest.
- Reflect about the importance of and understanding models of collaboration with the EU.
- Reflect on models of collaboration for developing PM in the different regions of Africa (governance, funding, partnerships, training program, etc.)
- Reflect about the challenges and opportunities for collaboration with Europe.

The workshop included Keynote presentations, roundtable discussion and small groups discussions, and the participants had the opportunity to network and meet colleagues from all around Africa and beyond.

The results of the workshop will feed into the project activities of carrying out the identification and collection of areas of mutual interest between Africa and Europe and validation of results already obtained by the project. It furthermore will feed into the activities concerning the exploitation and analysis of the potential for and advantages of collaboration in Personalised Medicine between Africa and Europe. The final expected outcome of the project will be the **EU-Africa**



**PerMed Action Plan**, a roadmap for facilitating, fostering and promoting the collaboration of Africa and Europe in Personalised Medicine, expected to be delivered by May 2024.

The agenda and concept note of the workshop are available in our project [website](#). Videos of all Talks and Presentations will be uploaded on the project YouTube channel shortly.



*Family picture of the second stakeholder workshop participants.*

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### 1st EU-Africa PerMed Summer School celebrated in Cape Town, South Africa, 22-23 February 2023



*Family picture of summer school participants*

On 22-23 February 2023, thirty-five participants, twelve speakers and twelve consortium delegates from 28 African and European countries, united in Cape Town and online on for the first **EU-Africa PerMed Summer School** focusing on “Standards in personalised medicine research.”

The EU-Africa PerMed summer schools have the objective to allow early career professionals from Africa and Europe to obtain new knowledge on personalised medicine (PM) research. They also provide a platform for networking, helping to foster future EU-Africa collaborations. This first Summer School covered key stages of PM research and highlighted the importance of integrating standards for quality research at each stage as well as the relevance of international collaborations in PM.

Speakers from African and EU countries presented participants with interactive lectures, where presentations on theoretical concepts were complemented with practical examples and followed by working sessions where participants worked in groups on case studies and questionnaires. A full session was dedicated to ongoing EU-Africa research collaborations, with presentations from three such collaborations and a presentation on funding and collaboration opportunities for PM.

Hosted by the South African Medical Research Council, its organization was a joint effort led by ECRIN, in collaboration with the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC), the Italian Ministry of Health, the Institute for Health Research Epidemiological Surveillance and Training (IRESSEF) and Innovatec.

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**OPTIMA project funded by ERA PerMed JTC2022**

**ERA PerMed**

**NEWSLETTER 9**



Julia H. Goedecke

**Coordinator:**

Julia H. Goedecke, South African Medical Research Council/WITS Developmental Pathways for Health Research Unit (DPHRU), Dept. of Paediatrics, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand and Biomedical Research and Innovation Platform, South African Medical Research Council, South Africa

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Tommy Olsson, Dept. of Public Health and Clinical Medicine, Umeå University, Sweden

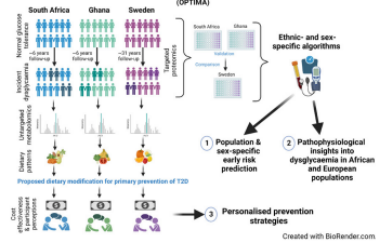
Rikard Landberg, Division of Food Science and Nutrition, Dept. of Biology and Biological Engineering, Chalmers University of Technology, Sweden

**OPTIMA**

**Omics Approach for Personalised Prevention of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus for African and European Populations**

The global prevalence of type 2 diabetes (T2D) is increasing, with sub-Saharan Africa most affected. Although the development of T2D differs between African and European populations, and between men and women, risk screening and guidelines for the prevention of T2D are generic. This collaboration between Sweden, Germany and South Africa enables the measurement of circulating proteins and metabolites to identify sex- and ethnic-specific biomarkers for the early prediction of T2D risk in two African cohorts (South African and Ghana) and a European (Swedish) cohort. We will also link these biomarkers to dietary patterns, which will be used to inform targeted dietary modifications for primary prevention of T2D in the different populations. The cost effectiveness of the targeted dietary modifications, as well as the perceptions among target populations regarding these early preventative strategies will be assessed in the respective countries to inform future implementation of personalised prevention strategies.

Omics Approach for Personalized Prevention of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus for African and European Populations (OPTIMA)



Our project partner, the **South African Medical Research Council** (SAMRC) joined the last **ERA PerMed** Joint Transnational Call (JTC) 2022, which was focused on “*Prevention in Personalised Medicine*”

The project *OPTIMA- Ommics Approach for Personalised Prevention of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus for African and European Populations*, coordinated by Julia H. Goedecke (SAMRC and the University of the Witwatersrand) received funding from this call. South Africa will collaborate with partners from Germany and Sweden. A good example of EU-Africa collaboration in PM research.

[More information](#)

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## Personalised Medicine - A Promising Catalyst for Equitable Health, a Webinar organized by APHRC and NACOSTI, partners of EU-Africa PerMed

In Kenya, there has been a growing interest in Personalised Medicine (PM) as the country strives to improve healthcare outcomes for its citizens. The medical models hold much promise for disease prevention and treatment and in Kenya PM has several potential benefits such as the ability to identify individuals who are at a higher risk for certain diseases, and to provide targeted treatments that are more effective and have fewer side effects. However, there are challenges to the implementation of PM in the country. While PM has the potential to improve healthcare outcomes in Kenya, it will require investment in infrastructure and capacity to fully realize its benefits.

Building on the efforts and successes of the **EU-Africa PerMed** project to integrate African countries in the global PM research agenda and conversations, partners - the African Population and Health Research Center (**APHRC**) and the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (**NACOSTI**) – recently brought together stakeholders virtually to discuss the PM Agenda in Kenya. Specifically, the round table webinar explored PM as a catalyst to improve health outcomes in the country, and opportunities and lessons from implementation. This session just took place on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2023.

The poster features logos for the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC), NACOSTI, and EU-Africa PerMed at the top. The main title is "Webinar Personalised Medicine: A Promising Catalyst for Equitable Health" with the subtitle "Opportunities and Lessons from Implementation in Kenya". Below the title are five circular portraits of the speakers and moderator, each with their name, role, and affiliation. At the bottom, the date and time are listed as "DATE May 5, 2023 | TIME 15:00hrs, EAT". There is also a note about funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation programme under Grant Agreement Number 964333, accompanied by the EU flag logo. Social media icons for Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter are shown with the handle @aphrc, and the website www.aphrc.org is listed at the bottom right.

**20** African Population and Health Research Center

**NACOSTI**

**EU-Africa PerMed**

**Webinar**

**Personalised Medicine: A Promising Catalyst for Equitable Health**

*Opportunities and Lessons from Implementation in Kenya*

**Dr. Evelyn Gitau**  
Moderator  
Director, Research and Related Capacity Strengthening, APHRC

**Dr. Anne Mwirigi**  
Speaker  
Consultant Hematologist, The Aga Khan University Hospital

**Dr. Damaris Matoke-Muhia**  
Speaker  
Principal Research Scientist and Ag. Deputy Director Biotechnology Research Programme, KEMRI

**Dr. Rabia Mukadam**  
Speaker  
Molecular Scientist and Head of the Department of Pathologists, Lancet Kenya

**Dr. George Ngondi Michuki**  
Speaker  
Founder and CEO, Africa Genomics Centre and Consultancy Ltd

**DATE** May 5, 2023 | **TIME** 15:00hrs, EAT

EU-Africa PerMed has been funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation programme under Grant Agreement Number 964333

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[www.aphrc.org](http://www.aphrc.org)



**Dr. Evelyn Gitau** - Director of Research and Related Capacity Strengthening Division at APHRC moderated the webinar and four experts drove discussion as follows:

1. **Dr. Rabia Mukadam** - Molecular Scientist currently heading the Molecular Department of Pathologists, Lancet Kenya.
2. **Dr. Damaris Matoke-Muhia** - Principal Research Scientist and Ag. Deputy Director Biotechnology Research Programme, Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI).
3. **Dr. Anne Mwirigi** - Consultant Haematologist, Aga Khan Hospital.
4. **Dr. George Ngondi Michuki**- Founder and CEO of the Africa Genomics Centre and Consultancy Company.

The webinar was held against the backdrop of the growing burden of non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in Kenya and as one of the activities leading to the culmination of **APHRC's 20-year milestone** that will be celebrated with a grand finale event between May 23 – 24, 2023 at the Center's Campus in Nairobi, Kenya.

The recording of the webinar is available [here](#).

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## The role of Health Technology Assessment under the Personalised Medicine approach - EU-Africa PerMed 5th webinar

**EU-Africa PerMed** has carried out its 5<sup>th</sup> Webinar, entitled "*The role of Health Technology Assessment under the Personalised Medicine approach*". The webinar took place on **14 April 2023**, with Dr. Ramiro Gilardino, who is the Policy Lead for Global Health Technology Assessment, as the speaker.

Health Technology Assessment (HTA) on Personalised Medicine focuses on assessing the effectiveness, safety, and cost-effectiveness of diagnostic tools and treatments tailored to individual patients based on their genetic, environmental, and lifestyle factors.

The graphic is a promotional poster for a webinar. It features the 'EU Africa PerMed 5th Webinar' logo in the top left corner. The main title is 'THE ROLE OF HEALTH TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT UNDER THE PERSONALISED MEDICINE APPROACH', with a subtitle 'Jointly organized by the EU-Africa PerMed Consortium'. A bullet point describes HTA on PM. A speaker photo of Dr. Ramiro Gilardino is shown with his name and title. The date and time are 'Friday, April 14, 2023, 08:30 AM, UTC'. A registration link is provided. The bottom includes funding information and the European Union flag.

**EU Africa PerMed**  
5th Webinar

### THE ROLE OF HEALTH TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT UNDER THE PERSONALISED MEDICINE APPROACH

Jointly organized by the EU-Africa PerMed Consortium

- Health Technology Assessment (HTA) on Personalised Medicine (PM) focuses on assessing the effectiveness, safety, and cost-effectiveness of diagnostic tools and treatments tailored to individual patients based on their genetic, environmental, and lifestyle factors. HTA can provide important information to support decision-making in the adoption, funding, and use of these technologies in clinical practice.

**Speaker**

**Dr. Ramiro Gilardino**  
Global Health Technology Assessment Policy Lead  
MSD Switzerland

**Friday, April 14, 2023**  
**08:30 AM, UTC**

Register here: <https://forms.gle/d76vmbrikviktnAB9>

EU-Africa PerMed has been funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation programme under Grant Agreement Number 964333

Webinar recording es available [here](#).

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## Mark your calendar: upcoming events

### EU-Africa PerMed 2nd Summer School

This event will take place in Nairobi, Kenya on **21-24 May 2024**. More information will be announced in the near future.

### EU-Africa PerMed 3rd Stakeholder Workshop

This event will take place in Dakar, Senegal on **26-27 June 2024**. More information will be announced in the near future.

### 6th EU Africa online training event: Round table «Capacity Strengthening For Research and Implementation of Personalised Medicine»

In this event that will take place on **22 June 2023**, European and African speakers will provide insights, address challenges, and propose strategies to strengthen the capacities necessary for the successful implementation of personalized medicine, specifically focusing on the African context, including pharmacogenomics and the PM ecosystem perspective.

**Time:** 13:00 UTC. Approx duration. 1:30 hour.

**Audience:** researchers, practitioners and policymakers in the field of health and PM.

Check regularly our [website](#) and [social media](#) to keep updated on all our upcoming events

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## ICPerMed family news

### Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda



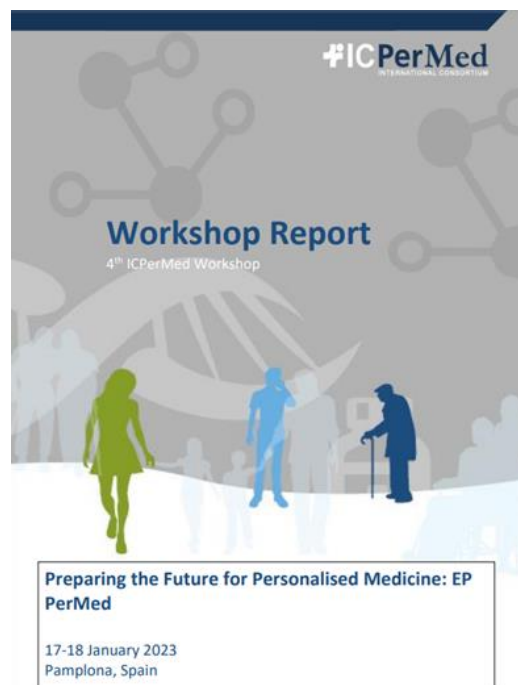
**ICPerMed** just published the **Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA)** for Personalised Medicine (PM). This SRIA will support a wide range of stakeholders and experts to further develop programs, activities, and research towards PM and care, as well as prevention. In line with this mission, its main intention is to support the planned new European Partnership for Personalised Medicine (EP PerMed).

The SRIA aims to ensure that the long-term vision of EP PerMed is translated into tailored roadmaps with funding and supporting activities, objectives and measurable outcomes. Therewith, the SRIA complements the EP PerMed proposal that has recently been submitted to the European Commission (EC).

[More information](#)

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## ICPerMed Workshop Report "Preparing for the future for Personalised Medicine: EP PerMed"



ICPerMed just published the report of the 4th ICPerMed Workshop, entitled 'Preparing the Future for Personalised Medicine: EP PerMed', which took place in Pamplona (Navarra, Spain) on January 17-18, 2023. The goal of this workshop was to discuss with the different involved stakeholders three areas that are relevant for realising the full potential of a Personalised Medicine approach: research, innovation, and implementation. Other essential transversal aspects were also addressed, such as the appropriate supporting framework including incentives, regulation, business models, regional and international perspectives, infrastructures and data access, patients and citizens engagement.

[More information](#)

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### Addressing Open Access in Personalised Medicine

Guidelines for PM research projects to implement Open Access Policies and data integration of research data on European databases

**OPEN ACCESS** is a key aspect of the Responsible Research and Innovation approach. It provides online, free, reusable and shared access to scientific information (peer-reviewed scientific research articles and research data). This helps to disseminate the latest research and innovation advances, with the following objectives:

- ✓ To improve the quality of the results
- ✓ To enhance efficiency
- ✓ To facilitate innovation
- ✓ To engage better citizens and society
- ✓ To avoid duplicity in public funds expenses
- ✓ To increase the impact and visibility of research

European Commission (EC) establishes [The Guidelines on Open Access to Scientific Publications and Research Data](#), to all scientific peer reviewed publications of the research projects funded or co-funded under H2020. EC facilitates Open Access through different initiatives:

- ✓ [European Open Science Cloud \(EOSC\)](#), promoting the access and reuse of research data from publicly funded research.
- ✓ [Horizon Results Platform \(HRP\)](#), promoting Key Exploitable Results to stakeholders.

ICPerMed aimed to train PM researchers about the importance to implement Open Access and data management best practices, and cooperate as well with ELIXIR and 1+ Million Genomes, in order to promote the linkage of data management and different repositories (genomics, omics and medical records).

**OPEN SCIENCE** promotes a transparent, more efficient, accessible science and collaboration and immediate dissemination of research results.

The EC has established Open Science as a policy priority for research programmes under H2020 and Horizon Europe, for international calls (funded by EC) as well for national and regional funding PM research calls. It is organised according to eight ambitions:

- ✓ Open Data
- ✓ To foster the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC)
- ✓ New Generation Metrics
- ✓ Rewards
- ✓ Future of scholarly communication
- ✓ Research integrity
- ✓ Education and skill
- ✓ Citizen science

Open Science and Open Access are key aspects of the Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) approach. It provides online, free, re-usable and shared access to scientific information (peer-reviewed scientific research articles and research data). In order to implement open access policies and data integration of research data into European databases, ICPerMed has compiled guidelines for personalised medicine research projects, in this [flyer](#).

[More information](#)

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## External events and news

### African Union-European Union High Level Policy Dialogue (HLPD) - Science, Technology and Innovation (STI)



AU-EU R&I Ministerial Meeting of the HLPD on STI jointly agreed to focus on: AU-EU Innovation Agenda (IA)

IA long-term public health action:

*“Designing and implementing new and innovative methods and tools to monitor, prevent, diagnose and counteract future health threats due to long standing, (re)emerging, or antimicrobial resistant pathogens, as well as chronic diseases, promoting One Health and precision medicine in a changing environment, embedding the mental health dimension in this approach. By doing so, ensure the implementation and strengthening of coordinated surveillance and responsiveness capacity at local / community, national, regional and continental level”.*

On **13 June 2023** will be holding the 2nd EU-AU Research & Innovation Ministerial Meeting in Addis Ababa with the following agenda:

- Innovation Agenda approval.
- Commitment to mobilise programmes and initiatives and of public and private funds to ensure speedy and effective implementation.

[More information](#)

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## 11<sup>th</sup> EDCTP Forum



Eleventh EDCTP Forum, entitled "Partnering for Global Health Research Innovation and Impact in Africa" will take place in Paris next **7-10 November 2023 in Paris, France**.

This Forum will mark the 20th anniversary of EDCTP and will be hosted by France. It will be jointly supported by the Second EDCTP Program (EDCTP2) and the EDCTP3 Global Health Joint Undertaking (EC GH EDCTP3). 600 participants are expected in Paris and in some sessions online participation will be possible.

[More information](#)

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## Precision Medicine Academy

The **Precision Medicine Academy (PMA)** will take place in Tunis in **12-24 June 2023** as part of the [PerMediNA project](#) "*Personalized Medicine in North Africa*".

The PMA will introduce participants to the concepts of precision medicine starting with ethical and regulatory aspects, biobanks, sequencing, data generation, analysis, etc., and will provide training in functional genomics and genome editing.



More information about the project is announced in PerMediNA accounts in [Twitter](#), [Linkedin](#) and [Facebook](#).

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## The AU-EU Innovation Festival

Building on the success of the "AU-EU Innovation Agenda Stakeholder Event" of Nairobi, Kenya in November 2022, the "**AU-EU Innovation Festival**" will be taking place in Cape Town, South Africa on **15th June 2023**. This festival will bring



insights on impacts and perspectives from the Nairobi event, featuring pitching sessions and exhibitions of innovations from both Africa and Europe (including an actual fair, with projects' roll-ups, booths, and real-life demonstrations).

[More information](#)



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## Funding opportunities

### European Research Council Advanced Grant 2023

Call for senior researchers from any country who are conducting research at the frontier of knowledge with international recognition.

- Funding: maximum €2,500,000, plus a possible additional aid of up to €1,000,000.
- Closing date: **May 23, 2023.**

[More information](#)



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### Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) Postdoctoral Fellowships 2023

**MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships** enhance the creative and innovative potential of researchers holding a PhD and who wish to acquire new skills through advanced training, international, interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral mobility. MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships will be open to excellent researchers of any nationality.

There are 2 types of Postdoctoral Fellowships:

- European Postdoctoral Fellowships. They are open to researchers moving within Europe or coming to Europe from another part of the world to pursue their research career. These fellowships take place in an EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country and can last between 1 and 2 years. Researchers of any nationality can apply.
- Global Postdoctoral Fellowships. They fund the mobility of researchers outside Europe. The fellowship lasts between 2 to 3 years, of which the first 1 to 2 years will be spent in a non-associated Third Country, followed by a mandatory



return phase of 1 year to an organisation based in an EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country. Only nationals or long-term residents of the EU Member States or Horizon Europe Associated Countries can apply.

[More information](#)

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## To keep always updated on EU-Africa PerMed project activities, events and news:

You can **subscribe to our newsletter** by clicking [here](#).

Visit our **website** and follow us in our **social media**:

 **Website:** <https://www.euafrica-permed.eu>

 **Twitter:** @EU\_AfricaPerMe


 **LinkedIn:** EU-AFRICA PerMed

 **LinkedIn Group:** EU-AFRICA PerMed

 **Youtube:** EU-AFRICA PerMed Project

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