



Deusto

International Research School-DIRS

CONTRACT NUMBER

PERIOD

CONTACT

MSCA-COFUND-2014-DP-665959

January 2016 - January 2021

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Summary

With a proven track in PhD training, the University of Deusto (UDEUSTO) via its Doctoral School, [Deusto International Research School](#) (DIRS), aims at attracting qualified international Early Stage Researchers for **high quality PhD training** that enhances research, complementary and transferable skills. DIRS COFUND project represents the UDEUSTO institutional commitment to the internationalisation of the Doctoral School.

The project's aims are grounded in a solid structure generated around a robust and **dynamic ecosystem that encourages and enables cooperation, co-creation, and collegiality** among 7 doctoral programmes and 24 research groups around **four research foci** centred on the challenges identified in the European and the Basque Smart Specialisation Strategies: Health and Wellbeing; Human Rights, Peace and Conflict Resolution; Sustainable Development and Innovation; and Lifelong Learning.

16 Early Stage Researchers (ESRs) were recruited via an open, transparent, merit-based, impartial, equitable, and internationally advertised process that took special care to avoid any form of discrimination. Full **internationalisation** of the procedures and the profiles was an essential aspect of the project.

UDEUSTO actively and creatively procures conditions conducive to frequent **dialogues between economic, cultural and social actors** whose cooperation and exchanges helped realise DIRS project's objectives. These dialogues ensured international and intersectoral mobility, including placements/internships to broaden ESRs' career employability tracks; cross-fertilisation of ideas, and ideation of solutions to societal challenges fuelled by shared concerns and funding. **42 partners** formally backed DIRS project.

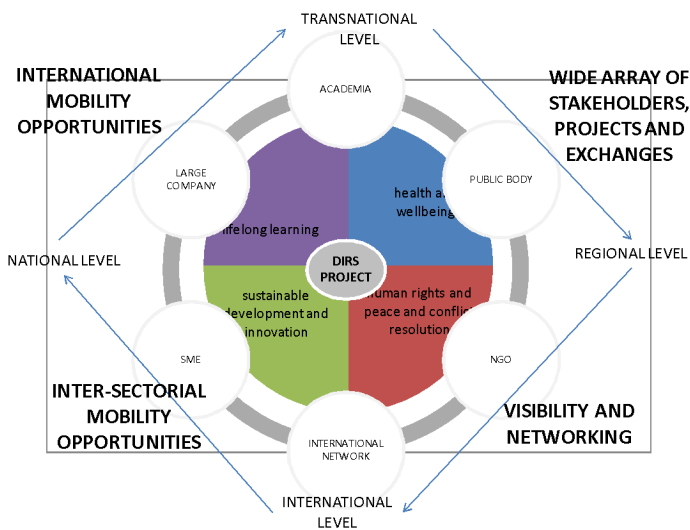
DIRS project started in January 2016 and finished in January 2021. As of October 2019 it ran together with the [6i-DIRS](#) project, the second COFUND Doctorate Programme awarded by the European Commission to UDEUSTO.

Objective

DIRS project responded to the need of developing the profiles of **researchers capable of leading highquality research projects**, not only in the academic institutions, which have been the traditional outlet for PhDs, but also in public and private institutions, in which knowledge and innovation are becoming key factors for success.

The project was created to meet the broader objective of **generating new and useful knowledge for and by society, ensuring the highest level of scientific quality** and promoting quality, mobility, transparency and employability. Aligned with the main purpose of the COFUND European programme, the overall objective of DIRS was to **foster excellence in the training, mobility and career development of researchers**, as well as to develop attractive career and knowledge-exchange opportunities for a new generation of young researchers.

Triple "i" dimension

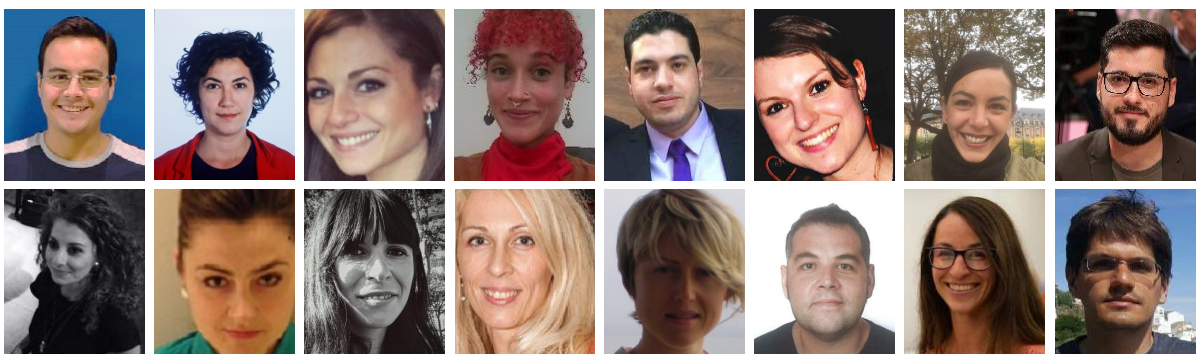


DIRS research training programme was structured around a **threefold dimension composed of international, intersectoral, and interdisciplinary components: the triple "I"**. UDEUSTO collaborates with numerous external partners being member of reference networks, and project leader in several research focus areas. Cooperation with these partners allowed ESRs to enhance their international experience and networking during the training process.

Likewise, the programme had a strong inter-sectoral component. UDEUSTO's **orientation and responsiveness to societal needs and challenges** have resulted in well-established partnerships with several enterprises and public and private institutions which provided hosting and secondment opportunities to the ESRs, as well as training and T-shaped skills. Some of these organisations co-funded research projects in each of the research focus areas, which integrated the cultural, productive, and social spectrum, through an interdisciplinary approach from the four research foci.

Researchers

16 ESRs from 11 different countries were recruited within the DIRS project. They acted as ambassadors of the project, and of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions at large. Furthermore, two of them were nominated European Union Career Student Ambassador by the Permanent Representation of Spain to the European Union-[REPER](#). DIRS researchers cast for wider outreach in every activity in which they participated, either with partner organisations or outside the network, while placing special emphasis on promoting students' scientific awareness. A dedicated section of the [Research School web page](#) contains a short summary of each of the ESRs' PhD thesis, together with the information regarding those of the 6i-Dirs COFUND project. Besides, the experience as DIRS COFUND fellows of a couple of them is narrated in the [DIRS storytelling video](#).



Results & Impact

DIRS project developed synergies with regional, national and international stakeholders to ensure the production of **world-class science, removing barriers to innovation and enabling collaboration between academic and non-academic actors for the delivery of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and innovation** within the Europe 2020 Strategy and the Basque Specialisation Strategy.

DIRS recruited researchers contributed to the advancement of science. As part of their research training programme, they actively participated in conferences and dissemination events, being trained to develop complementary communication skills to increase DIRS impact. Moreover, researchers committed themselves to present their findings at key European and international conferences.

DIRS researchers also contributed to the progress of science via scientific publications, such as articles, chapters of books or communications in scientific events.

On this international level, the project aimed to provide the possibility to partake and learn from research efforts involving multiple stakeholders related to the **most pressing challenges in the economic, social and cultural realms**, as well as provide PhD candidates with the development of the right set of skills to pursue collaborative endeavours; thus, enhancing the prospects of graduates to stand out beyond the academic sector. In fact, the ESRs pursued secondments and international mobility, as well as participated in different research projects run by their assigned research teams.

Through the DIRS project, the research skills of professionals who now work in different organisations were reinforced, **strengthening the processes and structures that ensure competitiveness and the sustainability of organisations, regions and countries**. Close collaboration with those organisations was ensured based on assessment criteria closely related to the excellence and quality of the research.

The COFUND project aimed to better prepare young scholars to meet current and future social challenges. With the support of the European funding, DIRS achieved both an increased quantitative and qualitative impact in terms of the **enhanced quality of the research** and complementary skills of young researchers and the breadth of young researchers' **career opportunities beyond academia**. Furthermore, the research training programme provided **rigorous training in research methodologies** and allowed the ESRs to delve into the factors, behaviours and results that determine the regional, national and international development of society, with the purpose of **contributing to the economic and social development** of the world we live in. Finally, special emphasis was placed on **innovation as a critical factor of competitiveness and sustainability** key to ensuring and preserving the **welfare of future generations**.



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement N° 665959. In addition, a number of institutions back and co-finance this project