

TWO PHD POSITIONS WITHIN THE MARIE SKŁODOWSKA-CURIE DOCTORAL NETWORK

EPHEMERAL - ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND PLACE: HOW ENTREPRENEURS MANAGE EVOLVING RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS THE LIFE-CYCLE

UNIVERSITY OF VALENCIA (SPAIN)

The University of Valencia invites applications for two research positions in the Department of Applied Economics and the Research Institute for Local Development (IIDL), in the context of the EPHEMERAL Marie Skłodowska-Curie Doctoral Network.

About the international network

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Doctoral Network project EPHEMERAL (Entrepreneurship and Place: How Entrepreneurs Manage Evolving Relationships Across the Life-cycle HORIZON-MSCA-2024-DN-01-01) is designed to train a new generation of rural researchers across Europe. The project brings a fresh perspective to rural entrepreneurship and rural development by foregrounding the temporal dimension: entrepreneurial opportunities are often fleeting and transitory, and rural places are constantly evolving. Building on the idea that entrepreneurs shape, and are shaped by, the places they inhabit, EPHEMERAL proposes two key premises: i) Place influences entrepreneurial opportunities differently across the life-cycle of ventures ii) Entrepreneurs, in turn, actively shape local places through their activities over time. By focusing on these dynamics, the project explores how entrepreneurship contributes to both change and continuity in rural societies.

Two PhD positions

PhD project 1: Rural social enterprises and resource mobilisation during the life-cycle of organisations

The key objective of this PhD is to improve knowledge of how social entrepreneurs mobilise a variety of resources (financial, human, knowledge...) across different levels of their network hierarchy, across sectoral borders, rural places and over time, in order to develop their organisations and address the needs of rural communities. This will be carried out through case studies and a mix-methods approach combining (i) explorative in-depth qualitative interviews that investigate resource mobilisation factors, processes and outcomes at both individual and organisational levels and (ii) Social Network Analysis to examine social entrepreneurs' networks from a longitudinal and spatial perspective.

The project will be supervised by Néstor Vercher (Dept. Applied Economics) and Juan Ramón Gallego (Dept. Applied Economics), in collaboration with a third international supervisor, Michael Price (Northumbria University Newcastle). The project involves secondments at the University of Groningen (Netherlands) and Northumbria University Newcastle (UK). In addition, the project will work closely with the Valencian Federation of Cooperative Entities (FEVECTA) as key organisation supporting social enterprises in the Valencia region. They will contribute in co-producing research methods, engaging with a wide range of social enterprises in the region, validating findings, and co-designing policy recommendations. Diputación de Valencia (provincial government) will also support this project

as a public body serving over 200 municipalities, with a dedicated department on rural development and entrepreneurship.

PhD project 2: Policy support for rural entrepreneurship: A life-cycle approach

This PhD project aims to deepen understanding of how policymakers perceive, support, and shape rural entrepreneurship at various stages of their life cycle. The research will integrate both social enterprises and for-profit ventures across diverse rural settings to examine how policies support: (i) the development of entrepreneurial skills; (ii) the functioning of business organisations and business networks; and (iii) place conditions conducive to rural entrepreneurship. Selected rural entrepreneurship support programmes will be analysed as case studies with a particular focus on local-level policymakers and business support organisations that interpret national policy and facilitate local implementation. The project will be conducted through surveys targeting a diverse group of stakeholders involved in rural entrepreneurship policies across multiple levels in order to identify success factors, best practices, and the ways policies adapt to the evolving dynamics of rural enterprises and places. It will also involve in-depth interviews with both programme managers and beneficiaries.

The project will be supervised by Javier Esparcia (Dept. Geography) and Néstor Vercher (Dept. Applied Economics), in collaboration with a third international supervisor, Steffen Korsgaard (University Southern Denmark). The project involves secondments at Northumbria University Newcastle (UK) & University Southern Denmark (Denmark). In addition, this PhD project will collaborate closely with the LEADER Local Action Group TURIA-CALDERONA. They will support the project by: (i) promoting our calls and results at a local level, (ii) engaging with diverse rural stakeholders (entrepreneurs, local politicians, development agencies, business networks, NGOs, etc.), (iii) organising and participating in focus groups and workshops, and (iv) providing access to facilities and workspaces. Diputació de Valencia (provincial government) will also support this project as a public body serving over 200 municipalities, with a dedicated department on rural development and entrepreneurship.

About the research environment

In addition to the international network built in EPHEMERAL, the selected candidates will benefit from the excellent academic and social environment of one of the oldest and most prestigious universities in Spain, the [University of Valencia](#) (among the top five scientific centres in Spain and 68th world place in Business Studies), located in the vibrant city of Valencia. The PhD candidates will enrol in the Doctoral Programme in Local Development and International Cooperation, managed by the [Research Institute for Local Development](#) (University of Valencia) in collaboration with the two other most relevant universities in our region, Universitat Politècnica de València and Universitat Jaume I de Castelló. The PhD student will also join the [Department of Applied Economics](#), with more than 100 researchers, and develop strong cooperation with the Department of Geography. The candidates will integrate into Unit for Rural Development and Evaluation of Public Policies ([UDERVAL](#)), an interdisciplinary research team with members of three different departments (Applied Economics, Geography, and Sociology) with a long record of participation in national and international [projects](#), [doctoral training](#), and collaboration with public and civil organisations.

Benefits

- Fully funded 3-year Ph.D. position.
- Full-time (35 hours per week).
- Employment contract with full social security coverage and all the benefits applicable to all other employees.

- Career development support and international networking and training (six international training weeks).
- Interdisciplinary supervision and integration within a consolidated research team.
- Secondments with academic and non-academic partners.
- Competitive salary (see table 1 below and [Marie Curie conditions](#)) and coverage of research, training and networking activities.

Table 1. Contribution for recruited researchers per person-month

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|--|---|---|
| <i>Living allowance</i> | EUR 3833.56 | Gross amount. Compulsory deductions under national law, such as employer and employee social security contributions and direct taxes, will be deducted from this amount. A country correction coefficient has been applied to the living allowance in order to ensure equal treatment and purchasing power parity for all researchers. In Spain the coefficient is 95,6%. Other coefficients apply to other countries. |
| <i>Mobility allowance</i> | EUR 710 | This allowance covers additional, private mobility-related costs (e.g. travel and accommodation costs). |
| <i>Family allowance (if applicable)</i> | EUR 660 | For candidates with family obligations during the action duration i.e. persons linked to him/her 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 researcher |
| <i>Long-term leave allowance (if applicable)</i> | EUR 4720 x % covered by the beneficiary | Personnel costs incurred by the beneficiaries in case of the researchers' leave, including maternity, paternity, parental, sick or special leave, longer than 30 consecutive days. |
| <i>Special needs allowance (if applicable)</i> | requested unit x (1/number of months) | Additional costs for the acquisition of special needs items and services for researchers with disabilities |

Eligibility criteria

- Applicants must not already hold a doctoral degree at the time of recruitment.
- Open to researchers of any nationality (visa and titles recognitions will be handled by the candidate. The necessary time for this should be considered before applying. More info on recognition of foreign titles [here](#)).
- Applicants must not have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in the recruiting country (Spain) for more than 12 months in the 36 months immediately before recruitment.
- Applicants must hold a master's degree in a relevant discipline (e.g., sociology, geography, economics, business, political science). A master's degree in Rural Development and related fields will be particularly valued.
- Applicants must demonstrate excellent skills in English and be able to write and communicate in Spanish.
- Applicants must demonstrate strong interest in rural and local development, international collaboration and interdisciplinary research.

- Previous engagement in research activity (publications, qualitative methods, participation in conferences, etc.) will be particularly valued.
- Recruited researchers must enrol in the Doctoral Programme in Local Development and International Cooperation ([Research Institute for Local Development](#) - University of Valencia).

Documents required

- Detailed CV, including complementary education, professional experience, scientific publications, etc.
- Motivation letter, including a summary of your master's thesis, your experience in rural topics, and a short text outlining how the PhD project(s) in this call could be developed in practice (research questions, methods, study areas, implementation...).
- A certified copy of your bachelor's degree certificate.
- A certified copy of your master's degree certificate.
- Application template (download it [here](#)).

Selection criteria

- Academic record: the average grades of the Bachelor's and Master's degrees will be assessed (30%).
- Training in rural development: will be assessed on the basis of bachelor's degree, Master's degree, and previous professional and research experience (30%).
- Motivation and communication skills: assessed through an interview (shortlisting may be used in the assessment process before interviews). The evaluation will focus on personal and professional interests in undertaking the doctoral thesis, proficiency in English and Spanish, and the feasibility of the proposed research in the 3-year period (40%).

Deadline

- Submission deadline: **6 January 2026** at 11.59 PM 23.59 (CET/CEST).
- Expected PhD start date: no later than May 2026.

Contact

Applications and required documents must be sent by email to Dr. Néstor Vercher (nestor.vercher@uv.es). Further information is also available through this email.