

The Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding as Programme Operator – Research Programme under Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021

Announcement

Call for Small Grant Scheme (support for ERC candidates) - 2019

1. Scope

The call aims to support the Romanian promising candidates in order to improve their project proposals before resubmitting to ERC (European Research Council) calls.

2. Objective of the call

- To increase the number of ERC successful proposals of Romanian candidates with Romanian institutions in the next ERC calls:
 - o By developing cooperation between researchers from Romania and the ERC Grantees (research groups) from abroad;
 - o By offering Romanian ERC candidates the opportunity to gain international research experience by working in an excellent research environment.

The call must contribute directly to the Research Programme Agreement output indicator: number of European Research Council (ERC) applications sent by candidates supported by the Small Grant Scheme.

3. Definitions

- **Beneficiary of the grant (Beneficiary)** – a Romanian researcher employed in a Romanian institution (research organization), who will carry out the research visit;
- **Project Promoter (PP)** – institution from Romania (research organization), the employer of the Beneficiary;
- **Research visit** - a visit carried out by the Beneficiary to a research institution from abroad (Europe), for some period of time, having as goal to gain international research experience by working in an excellent research environment;
- **Grant** - the funds awarded to Project Promoter (PP) in order to implement the research visit of the Beneficiary;
- **ERC Grantee** – the Principal Investigator of an ERC grant, awarded by European Research Council through competition;
- **Research group (ERC grantee's research group)** - group of researchers where the ERC grantee is part of and the Beneficiary will carry out the research visit;
- **Host institution** - institution from abroad (Europe) (university or research organization) with relevant ERC grantees, hosting the Beneficiary for the research visit.

4. Who can apply

- Romanian institutions representing Romanian candidates (researchers) who have received a favorable rating from a previous ERC evaluation (minimum score B in the first or second

stage) but have not succeeded in obtaining an ERC grant; herein defined as Project Promoters (PPs);

- The eligible Romanian institutions must be *Research organizations (employing institutions of the Romanian researchers as Beneficiaries)*, legal entities in Romania, as defined in the Community Framework for State Aid for Research and Development and Innovation (2014/C 198/01)¹.

The call is open for all disciplines.

5. Terms of participation

- The scheme provides the grant for a research visit of 3-9 months at an ERC Grantee research group in Europe. The research visit should be one uninterrupted period (short breaks up to 7 days are allowed); also, exceptions can be requested in the case of duly justified social or family reasons;
- The Romanian researcher (the Beneficiary of the grant) has to submit, with an institution from Romania, a proposal to the next ERC calls within 24 months after finalizing the research visit. Maternity or parental leave do not count into the time limit;
- If the Romanian researcher (the Beneficiary of grant) fails to meet his/her obligation in the given time frame, the Project Promoter will reimburse to UEFISCDI (Programme Operator) the funds provided for Individual support/unit cost per day covering the subsistence of the Beneficiary (*including accommodation*); in this case, according to an internal methodology² set up by each Project Promoter, the funds provided for daily subsistence allowance and accommodation have to be recovered from the Romanian researcher (its employee);
- One researcher can benefit only of one grant;
- The research visit must start within 2 months from the date of signing the contract.

6. Call budget

Total budget for this call is 1.500.000 Euro.

The grant covers 100% of the eligible costs of the project.

¹ 'research and knowledge dissemination organisation' or 'research organisation' means an entity (such as universities or research institutes, technology transfer agencies, innovation intermediaries, research-oriented physical or virtual collaborative entities), irrespective of its legal status (organised under public or private law) or way of financing, whose primary goal is to independently conduct fundamental research, industrial research or experimental development or to widely disseminate the results of such activities by way of teaching, publication or knowledge transfer. Where such entity also pursues economic activities, the financing, the costs and the revenues of those economic activities must be accounted for separately. Undertakings that can exert a decisive influence upon such an entity, for example in the quality of shareholders or members, may not enjoy a preferential access to the results generated by it.

² the internal methodology will be provided by the Project Promoter in the contracting phase (see Section 11 – Reporting and payments);

The minimum amount of grant assistance to be applied for is 5.000 Euro and the maximum amount is 50.000 Euro.

The budget of the grant will be calculated in accordance with the duration of the research visit based on the eligible cost mentioned at Chapter 7 from the present call.

7. Eligible costs

a) Travel (*round-trip from Romania to the place of destination, including the cost travel from/to the airport*), within the following ceilings, lump sum³:

For travel distances between 500 and 1999 KM	275 Euro
For travel distances between 2000 and 2999 KM	360 Euro
For travel distances between 3000 and 3999 KM	530 Euro
For travel distances between 4000 and 7999 KM	820 Euro

Note:

- a researcher could normally benefit of one extra round-trips during a research visit longer than 6 months

b) Individual support/unit cost per day covering the subsistence of the Beneficiary (*including accommodation*), within the following ceilings, lump sum:

Group of countries	Value (euro/day)
Norway, Denmark, Luxemburg, United Kingdom, Iceland, Sweden, Ireland, Finland, Liechtenstein	130
Netherlands, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Cyprus, Greece, Malta, Portugal	125
Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, Croatia, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Turkey, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia	119

c) Project Promoter's staff costs related to the administration of the grant, for the implementation period:

- Management of the contract/payments/administrative issues – *max. 10 h/month x 35 euro per hour (gross amount);*
- Monitoring of the activity of the Romanian researcher (technic/scientific) – *max. 5 h/month x 50 euro per hour (gross amount);*

³ Distance established according to: https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/distance-calculator_ro

d) Access to the research infrastructure/data base at the Host institution, up to 5.000 Euro.

Important:

Project Promoter's staff costs and the access to the research infrastructure/data base at the Host institution from abroad are not lump sums, they will be reported and consequently reimbursed/justified based on the real costs incurred/paid, within the ceilings provided:

- a. Project Promoter's staff cost: *payroll, timesheet, contracts, payment orders*;
- b. Access to the research infrastructure/data base at the Host institution from abroad - *invoice*.

- ✓ All expenditures must occur only from the date of signing the contract.
- ✓ The currency that will be used for budget estimation in the application form will be the EUR.
- ✓ For VAT registered institutions, the VAT is NOT an eligible expense;
- ✓ Non-deductible VAT is an eligible expense.

8. Submission of proposals

The proposals must be submitted in English, using the specific electronic submission platform (www.uefiscdi-direct.ro), by the Romanian researcher as Beneficiary of the grant and his/her employing institution (Project Promoter), using own credentials (username and password).

The Project Application Form (ANNEX 1) consists of:

- a) Annex 1.1 – The ***Project Application online form***;
- b) Annex 1.2 – The ***Project Core Application*** containing the ***application from the previous ERC call (only the Extended Synopsis of the scientific proposal - part B1, section a) and its Evaluation Report (both documents should be uploaded in the online platform in the dedicated session)***;
- c) Annex 1.3 – ***Proposal form (word doc.) - no more than 10 A4 pages in English language (to be downloaded, completed, signed, scanned and uploaded in the online platform in the dedicated session)***; it must contain, at least:
 - the scientific added value of the proposed research visit;
 - how the ERC Grantee (host research group) has been selected, the nature and the quality of the research group from abroad, including the present experience and infrastructure;
 - a work plan;
 - a motivation letter containing: the Romanian researcher point of view and the way in which his/her employing institution (Project Promoter) promotes the information about ERC application process, in order to increase the number of its ERC candidates;

- d) Annex 1.4 – *Letter of acceptance (free format)* from the ERC Grantee institution which will host the Romanian researcher (Beneficiary) during the research visit (*to be signed, scanned and uploaded in the online platform in the dedicated session*);
- e) Annex 1.5 - *CV of the Romanian researcher (including three main publications in the last five years, no more 2-3 A4 pages, scanned and uploaded in the online platform in the dedicated session)*;
- f) Annex 1.6 - *Declaration of the Romanian researcher* certifying, on his/her own responsibility, the correction of the information contained in the electronic version of the application and in Proposal form.

9. Selection process

The selection process consists of:

(1) *Eligibility check* of the application, carried out by UEFISCDI staff, confirming the eligibility of the Romanian researcher (beneficiary of the grant) and his/her employing organization (Project Promoter), the performance of the Romanian researcher as candidate in a previous ERC call (minimum score B in the first or second stage) and administrative verification (proposal written in English, completeness of proposal, etc.).

Applicants whose applications are rejected at this stage shall be informed and given time to appeal the rejection decision.

(2) *Appeals*. The appeals have to be send by email to:....., by fax to 021 3071919, or directly to the UEFISCDI headquarters, within 3 workdays from the date of information about the result. A final decision will be issued by UEFISCDI within 5 days from the deadline of the appeal registration process.

(3) *Quality appraisal of the application* by the Programme Committee⁴ (PC). Each application that passed the eligibility check shall be reviewed by the PC members (including vice members, if case). The evaluation will be conducted online, using the electronic platform (www.uefiscdi-direct.ro). The PC members will have access to all applications and will draw up an evaluation sheet for each application.

The evaluation will be carried out according to the following criteria:

- *Evaluation of the Romanian researcher’s scientific performance (YES/NO);*
- *Evaluation of the Romanian researcher’s potential to improve the subsequent ERC application (YES/NO);*

⁴The Programme Committee (PC) for Research Programme was set up by Programme Operator in accordance with the provisions of Guideline for Research Programmes – Rules for the establishment and implementation of programmes falling under the Programme Area “Research” of the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2014-2021.

- *Evaluation of the Romanian researcher employing institution (Project Promoter) proposal to promote information about the ERC application process in order to increase the number of applicants from Romania (YES/NO);*

PC will draw up a final list of projects recommended for funding within the available budget of call.

(4)*Final decision on the award grants.* The result of the selection process will be “accepted”/”rejected”. In order to be “accepted” a proposal must obtain YES for all the criteria. UEFISCDI will take the final decision on the basis of the final list of applications recommended for funding (“accepted”) by the PC.

After the selection procedure is complete, information on the results and the decision on the award of grants will be communicated to all applicants and published online.

Applications will be assessed and awarded on a continuous basis, until depletion of the available budget.

10. Collaboration Agreement

Considering the objective of the call, namely to offer the Romanian ERC candidates the opportunity to gain international research experience by working in an excellent research environment and the budgetary implications, the Project Promoter must submit to UEFISCDI, at the contracting phase, a *Collaboration Agreement* signed with the host institution from abroad (*template provided*).

11. Payments and Reporting

After a grant is awarded, a contract (*template provided*) will be signed between UEFISCDI and the Project Promoter, in RON, and uploaded in the electronic platform (www.uefiscdi-direct.ro). The exchange rate used will be the European Commission Exchange rate (InforEuro) from the date of the contract.

At the time of signing the contract with UEFISCDI, the Project Promoter must present:

- a) ***Internal approved methodology*** comprising information about: monitoring process of the work carried-out by the Romanian researcher (Beneficiary) and his progress made in order to improve the subsequent ERC application; methodology for the disbursement of funds to the Romanian researcher; the way in which the funds provided for daily subsistence allowance and accommodation have to be recovered from the Romanian researcher (in case the Beneficiary fails to meet his/her obligation in the given time

frame); the way in which the Project Promoter supports the activity of researcher in connection with his/her participation in ERC calls;

b) **Collaboration Agreement** between Project Promoter and host institution from abroad.

Payments:

Payments of the project grant can take the form of *advance payment* and *final payment*.

Advance payment:

- Up to 100% from the total requested budget, for PPs public institutions and,
- Up to 90% from the total requested budget for PPs private organizations.

Final payment:

- Minimum 10% from the total requested budget, only for PPs private organizations.

The advance payment shall be made upon signature of the contract between UEFISCDI and the Project Promoter (public or private). For private organizations, the final payment will be made after approval of the Implementation Report.

Reporting:

The Project Promoter and the Beneficiary submits to UEFISCDI one single **Implementation Report** at the end of the research visit, comprising:

- A Technical Report:
 - a) An explanation of the work carried out; an explanation justifying the progress made in order to improve the subsequent ERC application;
 - b) A statement by which the Beneficiary undertakes to submit to UEFISCDI the confirmation of the submission of the application to the ERC in a future call, specifying the type of ERC call (Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grants), according to Chapter 4 Terms of participation;
- A report on expenses incurred:
 - a) **Real cost** incurred for the Project Promoter's staff costs and for the access to the research infrastructure/data base at the Host institution from abroad (supporting documents) ;
 - b) **Value of the Individual support/unit cost per day** covering the subsistence of Romanian researcher (Beneficiary) (*including accommodation*), calculated as: number of days of the mobility * value per/day;
 - c) **Value of the cost for round-trip/round-trips travels.**

The reporting documents (*signed by legal representatives of the Project Promoter and the Beneficiary*) must be up-loaded in dedicated section of electronic platform (www.uefiscdi-direct.ro) within maximum *one month* after the research visit ended.

To be noted:

- a) The first part of Technical Report has to be signed by the Beneficiary, the Project Promoter and countersigned by the ERC grantee from the host institution;
- b) In case when the advance payment exceeds the value of the incurred and reported expenses (*differences between the value of the budget estimated in the project application and the budget executed at the final of project*) the Project Promoter is bound to reimburse the exceeding value to UEFISCDI.

12. Accounts

The accounts used for the financial flow of funds are those presented in the Government Emergency Ordinance 34/2017 (with all subsequent amendments) and the corresponding application norms available at: <https://uefiscdi.ro/small-grant-scheme-sgs>

13. Timeline of the Call 2019

Action	Date
Launching the call	January 2019
Deadline for submission of applications	until the depletion of the available budget but no later than 1 st of August 2019 - 4,00 PM (Romanian hour)
Evaluation process	Ongoing process
Funding decision	Ongoing process

14. Contact person:

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