

The Slovenian Research Agency, Bleiweisova cesta 30, 1000 Ljubljana, pursuant to Articles 2 and 11 of the Rules on the Procedures of the (co)financing and Monitoring of the Research Activities Implementation (Official Gazette RS, No. 52/16 and 79/17; hereinafter: the Rules), in conjunction with Article 15 of the Research and Development Act (Official Gazette of the RS, nos. 22/06-UPB1, 61/06 – ZDru-1 112/07, 9/11, 57/12 – ZPOP-1A, 21/18 – ZNOrg and 9/19), and based on Methodology for Assessing Applications for Co-financing of Research Activities No. 6319-2/2013-38 dated 5/06/2017 - official consolidated text No. 4 (hereinafter: Methodology), hereby announce

Public call for (co)financing potential ERC candidates to visit ERC grantees in 2020

1. The title and address of the publicly founded body:

Slovenian Research Agency, Bleiweisova cesta 30, 1000 Ljubljana (hereinafter: Agency)

2. Purpose of the public Call for proposals

In order to ensure a more uniform distribution of grantees of the European Research Council's funding, the ERC encourages national authorities to set up visiting fellowship programme to fund potential candidates for ERC's calls to visit teams of the ERC-funded Principal Investigators. In accordance with the above, and in line with goals grounded in Slovenia's strategic documents (Resolution on the National Research and Development Programme 2011-2020) (Official Gazette RS, No. 43/11), provided in Chapter 3.3 R&D Cooperation in the EU and globally, and as well with tasks of the Agency, the purpose of this Call is to stimulate researchers to apply for three types of ERC grants (Starting Grant, Consolidator Grant and Advanced Grant), and thereby increase the success rate of the ERC grant applications.

The Call shall be implemented by the Slovenian Research Agency in accordance with the ERC Guidelines: Fellowship to visit ERC Grantee, European Research Council, 15 March 2019, available on the following website:

https://erc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/document/file/fellowship_visit_erc_grantee_en.pdf

3. Subject matter and objective of the Call

The subject matter of this Call is (co)financing research fellows visiting former or current grantees of the European Research Council (hereinafter: ERC Principal Investigator) that undertake research projects in any scientific field. The duration of the researcher's visits from Slovenia (hereinafter: Visiting researcher) should be for a minimum of one month and up to six months, commencing within the year 2020. Researcher's visits are full length (indivisible) visits for a minimum of one month and up to six months.

The objective of this public Call is cooperation between the Visiting researcher and one of the former or the current ERC Principal Investigator with a view to develop and prepare the project of his/her own. Accordingly, the Call's ultimate objective is that within the two consecutive ERC calls of a kind, after the visit's conclusion, the Visiting researcher applies for an appropriate ERC grant: Starting Grant, Consolidator Grant or Advanced Grant.

4. Entities that can apply to the Call

Entities that can apply to the Call are research institutions and private researchers entered in the database on implementers of research & development activities in the Republic of Slovenia and in the Register of private researchers run by the Agency, meeting the conditions prescribed by the Research and Development Act.

5. Applicant and Visiting researcher shall at the time of submitting the application meet the following requirements

5.1. Conditions required for Research institution

(1) The applicant may lodge several applications, but no more than one application per researcher. Only one research institution is allowed to submit application for an individual researcher.

(2) The research institution, the applicant to this Call, is, in addition, a research institution through which a Visiting researcher shall apply for an appropriate ERC grant, as follows from paragraph 3 of this public Call.

(3) The applicant has to submit a signed statement declaring that the Visiting researcher shall apply for an appropriate ERC grant within the two consecutive calls of a kind after the visit's conclusion, as

follows from paragraph 3 of this public Call. In cases where the latter is unfulfilled, the Agency shall claim the funds paid;

5.2. Conditions required for Visiting researcher

- (1) A Visiting researcher must fulfil conditions required for the Principal Investigator as laid down in the Research and Development Act, the Rules, the Rules on the criteria for evaluating project leader qualifications (Official Gazette RS, No. 53/16), and Methodology (Chapter A. General, Part III. Quantitative entry conditions for mentors, principal investigators of projects and programmes). The compliance with conditions shall be checked on the closure date of the Call.
- (2) The Visiting researcher ought to have a research number meaning he/she is in the database on implementers of research & development activities in the Republic of Slovenia or in the Register of private researchers run by the Agency.
- (3) The Visiting researcher has to submit a signed statement declaring that he/she shall apply for an appropriate ERC grant within the two consecutive ERC calls of a kind after the visit's conclusion, as follows from paragraph 3 of this public Call. In cases where the latter is unfulfilled, the Agency shall claim the funds paid;
- (4) The Visiting researcher, who has already visited the ERC Principal Investigator on the basis of this Call, cannot submit any other application to the public Call for (co)financing potential ERC candidates to visit ERC grantees.

6. The application shall include:

- (a) Outline of the disposition of a future worked out scientific research project submitted as proposal to one of the ERC's main calls. The outline should be written in Slovene and English language in the form prescribed. The maximum length of the outline of the disposition should not exceed 15 pages in both language cases. Related tables, graphs and other visual elements could be attached as file to the application form, but no more than 5 pages and using portable document format (pdf);
- (b) Signed statement of the Visiting researcher declaring that he/she shall at the time of submitting proposal to one of the ERC's main calls meet the requirements of the call submitted: <https://erc.europa.eu/>;
- (c) Signed statement of the applicant and Visiting researcher declaring that the latter shall apply for an appropriate ERC grant within the two consecutive calls of a kind after the visit's conclusion, as follows from paragraph 3 of this public Call;
- (d) Curriculum vitae - showing compliance with the conditions for assessing the scientific excellence of the researcher, as follows from paragraph 8.b. of this Call. The form of the Curriculum vitae should be consistent with the ERC's instructions: <https://erc.europa.eu/>;
- (e) Letter of support of the ERC Principal Investigator and hosting research institution with the prescribed elements:
 - acquaintance of the ERC Principal Investigator and his/her research institution with the requirements of the ERC Fellowship initiative;
 - acquaintance of the ERC Principal Investigator with the proposed research of the Visiting researcher;
 - expert opinion of the ERC Principal Investigator on the outlined research project of Visiting researcher (strengths and weaknesses, potential success in the future ERC calls),
 - description of the strategic plan for an active inclusion of the Visiting researcher into an ongoing project of the ERC Principal Investigator;
- (f) Statement on the acceptance of invitation conditions.

7. Evaluation procedure

The evaluation procedure is conducted by the Temporary expert body (hereinafter: TEB) appointed by the Scientific Council of the Agency (hereinafter: SCA). The SCA shall adopt the decision on appointing the Chairperson, the Deputy Chairperson and members of the TEB, setting out their duties and duration of the term. Composition of the TEB shall cover all scientific disciplines whose applications are submitted. TEB is composed of members of the Scientific Council of the Disciplines

and Slovenian reviewers of the ERC projects within Horizon 2020, namely one of them for each scientific discipline whose applications are submitted..

Members of the TEB shall appoint two reviewers for each application submitted, taking into account the content of individual application. The reviewers are selected from the list of the foreign experts run by the agency, from the list of the Slovenian reviewers of the ERC projects within Horizon 2020, and as well from the list of members of the Scientific Council of the Disciplines. When selecting reviewers, priority shall be given to the foreign reviewers.

Every application is assessed by two reviewers, whereby one of the two is the reviewer – rapporteur. Reviewers evaluate individual elements of assessment by completing the evaluation form which contains a numerical and descriptive assessment of individual criterions – an individual report. After consulting the other reviewer, the reviewer – rapporteur prepares in a systematic and orderly manner the combined work report with an overall assessment for each criterion. The coordinated report is signed by both reviewers.

Members of the TEB shall then review the received reviewer's reports. In the event of a significant number of applications reaching the threshold for inclusion into the draft list of projects, and thereby exceeding the available funds for co-financing, an integral part of the evaluation process shall be an oral hearing (interview). The oral hearing is intended only for those applications whose total score is equal to the lower marginal threshold, which in the present case is determined by the funds available and by the principle of inclusion of all scientific disciplines whose applications are submitted. The oral hearing shall be assessed by at least two members of the TEB, whereby one of the members of the TEB ought to be from the scientific field of application submitted. The presentation is evaluated with an assessment from 0 to 5, whereby the quality of the application, academic age of the researcher and his/her prospects for success in the future ERC call shall be considered. The evaluation of the hearing is complementary to the overall assessment.

At the end of the evaluation procedure the TEB shall prepare a final evaluation of the applications and the financially evaluated priority list of applications, taking into account the principle of representation of all scientific disciplines in such a way that at least one positively assessed application for each discipline is included in the priority list. Ranking list of all other applications shall be carried out on the grounds of the overall assessment. The draft priority list of applications for co-financing is then submitted for discussion to the SCA. The decision on the selection of applications for (co)financing is adopted by director of the agency upon the proposal from the SCA.

8. Assessment criteria

The detailed evaluation elements applying to the excellence of the research project are set out below.

a) In terms of research project quality criterion, the following indicators shall be considered:

- To what extent does the proposed research address important challenges?
- To what extent are the objectives ambitious and beyond the state of the art (e.g. novel concepts and approaches or development across disciplines)?
- To what extent is the concept sound and the proposed timescales and resources necessary and properly justified (based on the outline of a scientific research project)?
- To what extent is the proposed research methodology appropriate to achieve the goals of the project (based on the outline of a scientific research project)?

b) In terms of researcher scientific quality, the following indicators shall be considered:

- To what extent have the achievements of the researcher typically gone beyond the state-of-the-art?
- To what extent does the researcher provide evidence of creative independent thinking?
- To what extent has the researcher demonstrated the ability to propose and conduct ground-breaking research?

c) Partnership quality is assessed against the Application form and the Letter of support of the ERC Principal Investigator, as follows from paragraph 6.e., whereby the following shall be taken into consideration:

- To what extent does the proposed research project correspond with the ongoing research project of the ERC Principal Investigator?

- To what extent is the proposed plan for an active inclusion of the Visiting researcher into the ongoing project of ERC Principal Investigator well-defined and feasible?
- To what extent is the relevant research infrastructure available to the Visiting researcher?

Each criterion is assessed on a scale from 0 to 5. For admission to the selection for the co-financing application must reach the threshold of three points for each criterion and 10 points in total. In the event that the application fails to achieve the threshold, it will be rejected.

9. The amount of available funds for the call and (co)financing of the visits

The planned annual amount for the Call is **EUR 240.000**.

The Call shall be implemented in line with the funds earmarked in the budget of the Republic of Slovenia and the Agency's budget.

The Agency shall, in respect to this Call, (co)finance Visiting researcher's visits with:

- a reimbursement of expatriation allowances, including accommodation costs, costs of one roundtrip to and from the city of the ERC research group, the cost of public transport to the place of the host institution, and meal expenses in total sum of 1.600 EUR per month, multiplied by the Country correction coefficient for living allowance, attached as an Annex to the invitation documentation. For countries where the correction coefficient is not indicated in this Annex, a correction coefficient of 100 is to be taken into account.

The Agency shall (co)finance Visiting researcher's visits for a minimum of one month and up to six months. After receiving the positive notice on the result of application, the applicant shall inform the agency on the exact date of the visit's start and end which has to be full length (indivisible) visit for a minimum of one month and up to six months. The Agreement between the Agency and the applicant sets out the amount as well as the rights and obligations and the terms and conditions applicable to the grant awarded.

A Visiting researcher who had visited the ERC Principal Investigator on the basis of this Call has to submit a final work report of the visit, using the form specifically designed for this purpose. Final work report should be delivered within 30 days after the visit's conclusion. The report has to be signed by both the Visiting researcher and the ERC Principal Investigator.

The applicant shall submit within 90 days after the visit's conclusion the financial report, which shall, in accordance with regulations, contain an overview of the expenditure of funds according to the cost groups of such research. The financial report shall be signed by the legal representative of the Research organization (applicant), Visiting researcher and the responsible accountant. The financial report shall be drawn up on a prescribed form set out by the Agency.

When the applicant submits the application for an appropriate ERC grant as follows from paragraph 3 of this public Call, the Visiting researcher has to inform the Agency with a valid evidence of application.

10. Method, form, and deadline for submitting applications

10.1. Submitting the application form with a digital signature

(1) An application to the Call is made and submitted by an application form using the ARRS-MS-ERC-FS-JR-Prijava/2019 on the Agency's web portal [eObrazci](#). A submitted application shall be considered complete if it contains both digital signatures (of the authorized person of the RI and the researcher).

(2) The application shall be submitted both in Slovene and English.

(3) An application shall be deemed duly if it is secured with both digital signatures on the web portal [eObrazci](#) by **5 November 2019, 14:00**.

10.2. Submitting the application form without a digital signature

(1) If the applicant and/or the researcher have no digital signature, the application form should be submitted unsigned in electronic form to the Agency's [eObrazci](#) web portal and in print, bearing the original signature of the authorized person of the RI and the researcher respectively and the stamp of the RI.

(2) Both electronic and printed forms of the application have to be completely the same in terms of content.

(3) Printed applications have to be submitted in closed envelopes marked "DO NOT open - CALL FOR (CO)FINANCING POTENTIAL ERC CANDIDATES TO VISIT ERC GRANTEES IN 2020 and with the name and address of the applicant, sent to the address: Javna agencija za raziskovalno dejavnost RS, Bleiweisova cesta 30, 1000 Ljubljana.

(4) The applications shall be deemed timely when submitted in printed and electronic formats by the deadline. An application shall be timely if submitted in electronic form to the Agency's [eObrazci](#) web portal by 5 November 2019, 14:00 whereas the printed format is to be received in the mail room of the Agency by 5 November 2019, 14:00. Applications sent by registered mail from Slovenia by 5 November 2019 (postal stamp) shall also be deemed timely.

10.3. Completeness of applications

(1) An application shall be considered complete if submitted using the prescribed form and format (point 10.1 - with digital signature, point 10.2 - without digital signature) and containing all data as prescribed herein. Incomplete applications will be addressed in accordance with the Rules.

(2) The committee for opening applications shall disregard untimely and incorrectly marked applications, which will be returned unopened to the sender (unless the name of the applicant is not clearly written on the envelope, then the application will be opened).

11. Applications opening date

The committee for opening applications will open all timely delivered and properly marked applications at the registered office of the Slovenian Research Agency, Bleiweisova cesta 30, 1000 Ljubljana, presumably on 7 November 2019.

12. Deadline by which the applicants will be informed of the results of the Call

The applicants will be informed on the outcome of the Call within eight days after the adoption of the decision by director of the Agency.

13. Place, time, and contact person where interested parties can obtain documentation of the Call

This public Call will be published from the date of publication in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia on the Agency's website www.arrs.si. Any additional information related to the Call can be obtained by contacting Bojan Volf, the person responsible for the Call, by phone (01) 400 5973 or by email: bojan.volf@arrs.si.