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UNIFI4FUTURE

call for proposals for the development of innovative and ambitious project proposals to be submitted under the European Research Council (ERC) Starting Grant scheme, with the participation of the University of Florence as Host Institution

Article 1 - Purpose and object of the call

The **UNIFI4FUTURE** call is aimed at enhancing the **quality of research** and the **competitiveness** of the University of Florence in participating in the **European Research Council (ERC)** funding program, **Starting Grant** scheme.

To this end, the University of Florence intends to support **outstanding young researchers of all nationalities** who wish to submit a **project proposal** in response to the ERC Starting Grant call. Specifically, the university will be funding **5 research projects** to be carried out within the University's Departments and thus aimed at supporting the development of innovative and ambitious project proposals going beyond the state of the art in the topic being researched, and which are likely to be competitive under the European Research Council (ERC) Starting Grant funding scheme.

The successful candidates of the selection process therefore **commit** to follow a research path aimed at submitting a project proposal as **Principal Investigator** under the European Research Council (ERC) Starting Grant scheme before the end of the project, designating this University as the **Host Institution**.

Successful applicants will be able to take advantage of the scientific support offered by the University ERC Task Force and the technical-administrative support of the U.P. Ricerca Europea e Internazionale for the preparation of their ERC Starting Grant proposals, as outlined in the leaflet attached to this announcement (Annex A).

Article 2 – Call budget

The 2023 budget provided for the initiative amounts to **€ 350,000.00** aimed at funding 5 research projects.



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The funded projects will have a duration of 18 months, from 01/01/2024 to 30/06/2025.

Each project will be awarded a funding of **€ 70,000.00**, of which **€ 50,000.00** (gross administrative cost) will be allocated to the contracting of the proposer through a dedicated **18-months research grant** and **€ 20,000.00** intended to cover the **costs incurred in preparing the project proposals** (such as consumables, travel and publication costs).

The research grants will be awarded and implemented in accordance with art.13 of the University "Regulations for the awarding of research grants", Rectoral Decree 68910 (550) of 14/05/2020, at the Departmental structure identified upon submission of the application. The Director of the relevant Department will play the role of scientific supervisor of the grant.

Article 3 – Eligibility Conditions

Applications to this selection procedure may be submitted by those researchers who have been awarded a **Ph.D. qualification at least 1 year and no more than 5 years** prior to the call deadline (title obtained in Italy or equivalent title obtained abroad). Eligible researchers must have already shown the **potential for research independence** and evidence of **maturity** by having produced at least **1 publication as main author** or without the participation of their PhD supervisor.

Applicants must propose **ground-breaking project ideas going beyond the state of the art** in the topic under investigation.

Requirements must be met as of the call deadline.

Applicants who, as of the start date of the project, have already benefited from research grants awarded under Law 240/2010, for a **total duration of more than 4 years**, in compliance with Art. 6, paragraph 2 bis of Law 27/02/2015, no. 11, are not eligible to apply.

The Administration may, at any time, by reasoned decision, order exclusion from the selective procedure for lack of the prescribed requirements.

Each proposer may submit **only one application** in response to this call.

Article 4 – Research Projects

Proposers are asked to develop an individual project in line with the criteria of typical European Research Council (ERC) program design. The current call for proposals operates on a **bottom-**



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up basis without predetermined priorities. Projects are required to targeting **new and emerging applications and fields** and introduce **unconventional and innovative approaches**.

The projects shall be carried out at the University of Florence and, in particular, at any UNIFI Department suitable for carrying out the proposed activities and whose research areas are consistent with the project themes. To this end, at the time of submitting the application, drawn up according to the template attached to this notice (Annex 1), the applicant shall enclose a letter of intent signed by the Director of the selected Department confirming the availability of their structure to host the researcher, identifying the spaces and infrastructures that will be made available. The letter of intent must be drawn up using the template attached to this notice (Annex 2).

In order to simplify the identification as well as the communication with the Departments of choice, attached is a list of the Departments of this University with the identification of their main research topics and the relevant contacts (Annex B).

Article 5 – Submission of the application and deadline

The application form for this call for proposals, to be drafted in English according to the template attached to this notice (Annex 1), shall be submitted through the dedicated online platform available at the following link <https://sol.unifi.it/bandiricerca/engine>, starting from **May 24, 2023 at 9:00 AM, CET**. The application deadline is set for **July 25, 2023 at 1:00 PM, CET**.

The submission date of the application is certified by the electronic system, which will not allow any changes to the application once the submission deadline has expired. No other forms of submission or sending of the application will be allowed. In order to access the online platform, internal applicants shall use their university credentials. External applicants, not in possession of such credentials, shall request them at ricercaue@unifi.it no later than July 19, 2023 at 1:00 PM, CET.

Under penalty of exclusion, in the application form applicants must declare:

- i. their personal details (surname and first name, date and place of birth, tax identification number when available, residence, citizenship, telephone numbers, e-mail address);
- ii. their Ph.D. qualification (or equivalent), the date it was awarded and the issuing



- university;
- iii. that they enjoy civil and political rights;
 - iv. that they are not aware of having been convicted for any criminal offences or having pending criminal proceedings (if this is not the case, please indicate the relevant convictions and the date of the sentence issued by the judicial authority; please also indicate whether an amnesty, pardon, etc. was granted even if such sentence/s have not been entered in the criminal record. Criminal proceedings must be indicated, whatever their nature);
 - v. if they are holders of research grants relating to previous periods carried out pursuant to art. 22 of Law 240/2010;
 - vi. that they authorize the processing of the personal data provided, pursuant to Legislative Decree No. 196/2003 and to Legislative Decree No. 101/2018;
 - vii. that they commit to submitting a project proposal as Principal Investigator in the framework of the European Research Council (ERC) Starting Grant programme and in particular in the framework of the 2025 ERC Work Programme, identifying the University of Florence as Host Institution.

The application form (Annex 1) includes:

- i. ERC format curriculum vitae of the candidate drafted following the template included in the application (max. 2 pages);
- ii. track-record including the candidate's most relevant scientific achievements, drafted following the template included in the application (max. 2 pages);
- iii. information on the candidate's involvement in European projects (e.g. having been awarded a Seal of Excellence for individual MSCA proposals, having been awarded an individual MSCA project, carrying out and/or having carried out the role of PI or other roles in European funded projects, having submitted proposals in the framework of European calls);
- iv. title of the research project;
- v. description of the research project (max. 8000 characters);
- vi. ERC panels (in preferential order, one to two panels) and ERC sub-panels (in preferential order, one to three sub-panels of the indicated ERC sectors);



- vii. free keywords (minimum two - maximum four);
- viii. the department of the University of Florence at which the candidate intends to carry out the research and preparation of the project proposal.

Candidates must attach to the application, under penalty of exclusion:

- i. a copy of a valid ID;
- ii. a letter of intent signed by the Director of the Department identified to carry out the research activities and the preparation of the project proposal, drawn up according to the template attached to this notice (Annex 2);
- iii. a self-certification, drawn up according to the template attached to this notice (Annex 3).

Each candidate, under penalty of exclusion from this call for applications, may submit only one application.

Failure to comply with any of the above indications is a ground for ineligibility of the application.

All notifications relating to this selection will be published, for all intents and purposes, on the Official Online Register of the University of Florence: <https://www.unifi.it/albo-ufficiale.html>

The call for proposals and the relative forms are available on the University website at the following address www.unifi.it.

Article 6 - Exclusions

Candidates are to be excluded from the selection process when any of these situations occur:

- i. the application has been submitted after the deadline set out in art. 5;
- ii. candidates have not attached the required self-declaration regarding the possession of the admission requirements, or they have produced false or non-compliant declarations, certifications and/or documentation;

The following candidates are NOT ALLOWED under any circumstances to take part to the selection procedure:

- candidates who have a relationship of kinship and affinity, up to and including the fourth degree, with academic staff belonging to the Department where they are going to carry out their research project, or with the Rector, the General Manager or a member of the University's Board of Directors, as required by art. 18, paragraph 1 letter c) of Law n. 240,



and in accordance with art. 4, paragraph 2, letter c) of the current Code of Ethics of the University of Florence, or with any of the members of the Selection Board.

The Administration may enforce these exclusion measures at any time in the event of a lack of the required prerequisites.

The Administration will carry out checks on the truthfulness of the content of the self-declarations provided by candidates.

Article 7 – The Selection Board

The Selection Board, which will be appointed after the deadline of the call by Rectoral Decree, will be composed of at least 5 members from among tenured professors and researchers of the University of Florence, whose scientific skills match the topics of the candidate's projects.

The members of the Selection Board must provide a declaration confirming the absence of any incompatibilities and must observe the principles of ethics and confidentiality (pursuant to Articles 46 and 47 of Presidential Decree No. 445 of 28 December 2000).

Furthermore, members of the Selection Board must not:

- i. have been engaged in research collaborations with any candidates in the 5 years prior to the publication of this call;
- ii. have been co-authors of scientific publications with any candidates in the 5 years preceding the publication of this call.

The Selection Board, with the assistance of the Research and Technology Transfer Area, shall verify compliance with the eligibility requirements within 30 days following the deadline of this notice.

The Selection Board, for the sole purpose of participation in this selection procedure, shall assess the eligibility of qualifications obtained abroad against the corresponding qualifications awarded in Italy.

Article 8 – The selection process and merit ranking

The selection will be carried out on the basis of both qualifications and oral examination (interview) of candidates and will be aimed at assessing the innovative nature, ambition and feasibility of the



research project, as well as the scientific quality, creativity and commitment of the candidate.

The first step of the selection process will be the evaluation of qualifications aimed at identifying those candidates who could be admitted to the interview.

Candidates who, following examination of their qualifications, have obtained a minimum score of 30 points, according to the assessment criteria set out in Article 9 of this notice, will be admitted to the interview.

Interview arrangements, dates and times, will be communicated by email to successful candidates.

During the interview, candidates will be asked to present their research project in a 20-minute short speech. At the end of the presentation, space will be provided for any questions posed by the Selection Board.

Following the interviews, the Selection Board referred to in Article 7 of this notice will draw up a merit list of candidates according to descending order of marks obtained. Candidates who have obtained a total score of no less than 70/100 shall be admitted to the ranking list.

In the event of a ranking tie, preference shall be determined:

- i. by membership of the under-represented gender among the applicants;
- ii. by younger age.

The 5 candidates with the highest score will be the winners of the competition.

The merit ranking will be approved by Rectoral Decree.

The Administration reserves the right to make all the necessary checks on the declarations made by the candidates in the documentation submitted. The commencement of the research activity is conditional upon verification of the possession of the prescribed requirements.

Each successful candidate will enter into a Research Fellowship contract to be signed by him/her and the Director of the host Department.

Article 9 – Evaluation criteria

The Selection Board may award each candidate up to a maximum of 100 points, of which a maximum of 50 points for the evaluation of qualifications and a maximum of 50 points on the basis of the results of the interview.

The score awarded is based on the following evaluation criteria:



1. Evaluation of qualifications (max. 50 points), to be awarded according to the following parameters:
 - i. candidate's professional profile (CV and track record) (max. 40 points);
In assessing the candidate's profile, particular consideration will be given to:
 - number and nature of publications as main author or without PhD supervisor;
 - previous professional positions/roles;
 - presentations and speeches at international scientific conferences;
 - awards, prizes and patents, if any;
 - post-doctoral contracts held in countries other than the one in which the doctoral degree was awarded.
 - ii. involvement in European projects (e.g. having been awarded a Seal of Excellence for individual MSCA proposals, having succeeded in an individual MSCA project, carrying out and/or having carried out the role of PI or other roles in funded European projects, having submitted proposals in European calls) (max. 5 points)
 - iii. have submitted a proposal under the ERC programme that was admitted to the second evaluation step (max. 5 points).
2. Assessment of the interview, which will be conducted in English. A maximum of 50 points will be awarded according to the following parameters:
 - i. innovativeness, ambition and novelty of the project (max. 15 points);
 - ii. quality of methodology and feasibility of the project (max. 15 points);
 - iii. social impact and/or application potential of the project (max. 10 points);
 - iv. candidate's communication skills and clarity of reasoning (max. 10 points).

Article 10 – Results Monitoring and Evaluation

Successful candidates are required to submit, by the end of the sixth month of the project, a scientific report describing the activities carried out and the progress of the ERC Starting Grant proposal under preparation. The report must be countersigned by the Director of the host Department and will be subjected to evaluation by the University ERC Task Force.



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Article 11 – Personal data processing

In compliance with the principles of lawfulness, fairness, transparency, appropriateness, relevance and necessity set out in Art.5, paragraph 1 of the GDPR (EU Regulation 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data, which provides for the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data as a fundamental right) the University of Florence, as Data Controller, will process the personal data provided by candidates when registering for the selection procedure, solely to allow the same to be carried out in compliance with the relevant legislation in force. The Data Protection Officer (DPO) is Dr Massimo Benedetti, Director of the General and Legal Affairs Area, Florence, Via G. La Pira n.4, tel. 0552757667 e-mail: privacy@adm.unifi.it. https://www.unifi.it/upload/sub/protezionedati/Informativa_SELEZIONI.pdf

Article 12 – Procedure Manager

The person in charge of the procedure is Eleonora Agresti, Viale Morgagni, 40/44 - 50143 Florence; tel. +39 055 2751909; eleonora.agresti@unifi.it

Article 13 – Final provisions and publication

For all matters not provided for in this announcement, reference is made to the current legislation in force.

This notice will be posted in the University's Official Online Register, on <https://www.unifi.it/albo-ufficiale.html> and on the European Union's Euraxess website.

Florence,

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