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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 a maximum of **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 (Allegato A).

Article 2 – Call budget

The 2024 budget provided for the initiative amounts to **€ 350,000.00** aimed at funding a maximum of 5 research projects.



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The funded projects will have a duration of 18 months, from 01/11/2024 to 30/04/2026.

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 amount of the research grant may be supplemented by a **Mobility Allowance**, in the amount of € 11,000.00 (gross administrative cost) in case the winning candidate(s) is/are resident abroad and in possession of a PhD degree or other equivalent degree obtained abroad.

The expenses for research activities, amounting to € 20,000.00, may be increased by a maximum supplementary amount of € 10,000.00, in the event that the winning candidate(s) requesting this at the application stage demonstrate the need to take advantage of additional resources to carry out research activities. Requests may be granted within the availability of the overall budget referred to in this article.

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 call deadline, 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-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>, starting from **May 3, 2024 at 9:00 AM, CET**. The application deadline is set for **July 2, 2024 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 June 27, 2024 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. their ERC format curriculum vitae and track record drafted following the template included in the application form (max. 4 pages);
- iv. information on their involvement in European projects;
- v. title, acronym, ERC panel, CUN keywords and free keywords of the research project submitted in response to this call;
- vi. the department of the University of Florence at which the applicants intends to carry out the research and preparation of the project proposal;
- vii. abstract of the research project submitted in response to this call (max. 1500 characters);
- viii. request for supplementary funding for research expenses, claimed amount and justification thereof;
- ix. description of the research project submitted in response to this call (max. 8000 characters);
- x. that they hold a Ph.D. qualification obtained at least 1 year and not more than 5 years before the call deadline;
- xi. that they have at least one publication as lead author or without the participation of their doctoral supervisor;
- xii. that they commit to submitting a project proposal as Principal Investigator in the framework of the European Research Council (ERC) Starting Grant programme, identifying the University of Florence as Host Institution;
- xiii. that they are aware of the fact that, in case of a positive evaluation of the proposal,



the contracting and management of the contractual relationship will take place according to the provisions of the University Regulations for the award of Research Grants, D.R. 68910 (550) of 14/05/2020;

- xiv. that they are aware of the restrictions on accumulation and incompatibilities set forth in Articles 3 and 4 of the Regulations for the Granting of Research Grants - R.D. No. 68910 (550) of May 14, 2020;
- xv. any previous research grant holdings pursuant to Article 22 of Law 240/2010, if applicable;
- xvi. that they enjoy civil and political rights;
- xvii. that they have not been dismissed, discharged from previous employment with a public administration due to persistent poor performance, or not to have been declared ineligible for another state employment under Article 127 letter d) of the Consolidated Text of 10 January 1957, No. 3, for having obtained employment through the submission of false or invalid documents, or not to have ceased service following disciplinary dismissal;
- xviii. that they have not received criminal convictions in Italy or abroad and are not subject to measures regarding the application of preventive measures, civil judgments, and administrative measures recorded in the judicial record according to current regulations
- xix. 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);
- xx. that they authorize the processing of the personal data provided, pursuant to Legislative Decree No. 196/2003 and to Legislative Decree No. 101/2018;
- xxi. that the implementation of the project activities is expected not to cause significant harm to environmental objectives (the so-called principle of 'Do No Significant Harm' (DNSH), pursuant to Article 17 of Regulation (EU) 2020/852);



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- xxii. that the implementation of the project entails compliance with applicable European and national legislation, with particular reference to the principles of equal treatment, non-discrimination, transparency, proportionality, and publicity;
- xxiii. to provide free and online access (at least in green access mode) to the results obtained and to the content of research subject to peer-reviewed scientific publications within the project, in accordance with Article 4, paragraphs 2 and 2 bis, of decree law 8 August 2013, no. 91, converted with amendments by law 7 October 2013, no. 112;
- xxiv. to commit to all confidentiality obligations or personal data protection aware that data which may compromise the achievement of the main research objective are exempt from open access;
- xxv. that they are aware of the fact that the University of Florence reserves the right to verify the truthfulness of the declared information, also by requesting, if necessary, adequate documentary evidence.

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



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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 60 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 conducted based on qualifications and interview, 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 procedure will consist of an initial phase of qualification assessment to identify candidates eligible for the interview. Candidates who have obtained a minimum score of 18 points, according to the evaluation criteria outlined in the subsequent article 9 of this notice, will be admitted to the interview.

The details of the interview, including dates and times, will be communicated via email to eligible candidates.

During the interview, candidates will be asked to present their research project with a brief presentation lasting a maximum of 8 minutes. At the end of the presentation, the Commission may ask questions.

Following the interviews, the Evaluation Committee(s) referred to in Article 7 of this notice will proceed to create a merit ranking of candidates in descending order of score achieved. Candidates with an overall score of not less than 60/100 will be included in the ranking.

In case of equal scores, preference will be given to:

- I. belonging to underrepresented gender among applicants;
- II. younger age.

The winners of the evaluation process will be the candidates with the highest scores, up to a maximum of 5 or until the funding is exhausted, as per Article 2 of this notice. The merit ranking



will be approved by Decree of the Rector.

The Administration reserves the right to verify all information declared by candidates in the documentation submitted. The commencement of research activities is subject to verification of compliance with the prescribed requirements.

Each winner will enter into a Research Grant contract signed by both the winner and the Director of the hosting Department

Article 9 – Evaluation criteria

The Evaluation Committee may assign a maximum of 100 points to each candidate, with a maximum of 30 points reserved for the assessment of qualifications and a maximum of 70 points for the overall evaluation of the research project and the interview.

The score awarded is based on the following evaluation parameters:

1. Qualification Assessment (max. 30 points) to be allocated according to the following criteria:
 - i. Candidate's profile (CV and track record) (max. 25 points):
 - Scientific production (quality, quantity, and independence);
 - Roles and positions held;
 - Presentations and contributions at international scientific conferences;
 - Awards, recognitions, and patents;
 - Post-doc contracts carried out in countries other than those where the doctoral degree was obtained.
 - ii. Involvement in projects funded by the European Commission (e.g., possession of a Seal of Excellence for Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions individual proposals, winning a project under the Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions Individual Fellowships/Postdoctoral Fellowships program, serving as Principal Investigator for proposals under European calls, conducting and/or having conducted research activities under funded European projects, having submitted a proposal under the ERC program admitted to the second evaluation step) (max. 5 points);
2. Overall evaluation of the research project and the interview, conducted in English.

A maximum of 70 points will be assigned according to the following criteria:



- i. Innovation, ambition, and originality of the project (max. 30 points);
- ii. Quality of the methodology and feasibility of the project (max. 20 points);
- iii. Scientific, social, and/or applicative impact (max. 10 points);
- iv. Communicative skills and clarity of presentation by the candidate (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.

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



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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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