

Call for Proposals

Installation Research Projects (UIP-2025-02)

This Call has been prepared in accordance with general acts of the Croatian Science Foundation. By submitting an application to this Call, you shall acknowledge the implementation of these acts. The terms used in the masculine gender herein are used to refer to persons of any gender.



About the Programme

The aim of the Programme is to support the development of independent research careers of early-career researchers and new research teams that engage in internationally recognisable and nationally relevant topics. The Call represents a logical sequel to post-doctoral specialization and focuses on the moment in the careers of young scientists at which they are prepared to develop new research topics and/or methodologies.

Scientists who received a positive evaluation will have the opportunity to establish their own research group that will engage in innovative research topics by employing early-career researchers as the core of the newly established group. This Call provides for the employment of senior research assistants, while research assistants (PhD students) can be recruited through a separate Call "Young Researchers' Career Development Project". Other early-career researchers whose salaries are not funded through the project may also be team members and may take part in project activities.

Funding provided by HRZZ in the five-year period shall represent a solid foundation for research independence and successful implementation of an internationally competitive project as it enables financing of research costs, acquisition of crucial scientific equipment, recruitment of new research team members and dissemination, collaboration and training for research team members. HRZZ expects Principal Investigators to have an excellent track record and exhibit potential for preparing, organising and implementing a five-year project. Apart from successful implementation of the project's work plan, the Principal Investigator is expected to successfully manage the research team, navigate the development of young researchers as well as develop and secure sustainability of the research team and the research upon the end of the project through applying to other competitive Croatian and international sources of funding. The elements referred to above need to be elaborated and visible in the project proposal as they are one of the crucial elements of evaluation, both in the application and project monitoring stages.

Since the basic selection criteria are quality and innovation potential of the research and topic that is internationally recognisable and nationally relevant, the Principal Investigators may define the research topic in all scientific areas at their own discretion. The main pre-requisite is strong support of the Legal entity (scientific organization) at which the Principal Investigator is or will be employed throughout the project implementation period. The Legal entity (Applicant) should, in a clear and concrete manner, provide support to the work of the emerging research group and describe how the new research topic would integrate in the Institution's existing development strategy.

The Programme promotes research excellence and innovation, open science and research integrity principles, positive research culture and effective valorisation of knowledge and publication of research results in open access. Researchers are directed toward storing their publications in repositoria and publishing in journals with a quality-oriented editorial policy. In addition, researchers are expected to manage their research data in a responsible manner, in line with open access and FAIR principles as well as principles pertaining to sustainable approach to, re-use and sharing of research data.

Objectives of the Call:

- Supporting the development of independent careers following PhD
- Supporting the establishment of new research groups led by early-career researchers
- Including early-career researchers in the implementation of research projects
- Supporting research excellence and innovation and attracting and retaining talented early-career researchers

Call in brief:

Call opening date: 20 January 2025

Application deadline: 24 February 2025 until 13:00 (CEST)

Research area: The call is open to all scientific disciplines.

Duration of project: 5 years

Maximum total project budget: 300.000,00 EUR

Minimum total project budget: 125.000,00 EUR

Total Call budget: 18.000.000,00 EUR

Estimated project start date: second half of 2025

SUBMITTING A PROJECT PROPOSAL

Eligibility of applicants

The Applicant is a legal entity that submits a project proposal to the Call.

Eligible applicants include:

- higher education institutions
- scientific institutes
- other research-oriented legal entities that employ at least five PhD holders who have been employed as the institution for at least one year¹.

The Principal Investigator, as the end beneficiary of funding, should meet the following conditions:

- employed at the Applicant throughout the project implementation period,
- obtained PhD degree at least 2 and at most 10² years before the submission deadline

¹ This provision shall be applied only if other conditions of the Call are met, primarily the provision that the Principal Investigator should be employed with the applicant throughout the project period.

² HRZZ will consider Applicants and research group members who acquired their PhDs more than ten years ago if they deliver a proof of parental leave or long-term illness; this period will be deducted from the time elapsed from the date of PhD award. In case of maternity leave, the time elapsed from the date of PhD award will be extended for 18 months for

- has an excellent track record and shows potential for leading a research team and developing new research topics and/or methodologies,
- is not a Principal Investigator of another project funded by HRZZ, is not (or was not) the PI of a previous Installation Research Project, is not listed as a team member on another proposal in the current Call (UIP-2025-02) and is not a PI financed through a call with similar objectives funded from other sources,
- can submit only one project proposal in the capacity of Principal Investigator at the Call UIP-2025-02.

Supporting project proposals

Support of the Legal entity (Applicant) is a pre-requisite for submitting a project proposal to this Call; therefore, it must be detailed and contain a clear description of all required elements. The explanatory part of the institutional support should clearly demonstrate the following:

- that the Principal Investigator is or will be employed throughout the project financing period,
- how the research fits into the Institution's long-term strategy,
- that the Institution will provide infrastructural, technical and administrative support
- that the Principal Investigator would be able to dedicate the prescribed number of working hours (55%) to the project, which would enable unhindered achievement of the work plan and objective of the present Call.

The Legal entity must provide clear support the work of the emerging research group and demonstrate the support to the researchers even after the project has finished. The support of the Legal entity shall also include the support to the development of the topics of the proposed research and present how the development of the new line of research fits into the institution's research strategy in the long term. Apart from this, the Legal entity should explain in what way it would support the emerging research group and encourage and facilitate the autonomy of the Principal Investigator in every year of project implementation. The Institution must warrant that the Principal Investigator would not bear a significant administrative burden or significant teaching duties, while the institutional support must include clear and concrete support to the researcher and the process of him/her becoming an independent researcher.

Research:

- in all areas of science,
- new, original research aimed at creating new knowledge, systems, processes, services, patents, solving practical objectives or their improvements,
- opening new research topics or methodologies, thus demonstrating the autonomy of the researcher and is not funded from other sources,
- dealing with internationally recognised and/or nationally relevant topics,

every child born after the date of PhD award. In case of paternity leave, the time elapsed from the date of PhD award will be extended for the actual period of paternity leave for every child born after the date of PhD award. For long-term illnesses or clinical treatments, time elapsed from the date of PhD award will be extended for the period of absence due to treatment after the date of the PhD award. For Applicants holding a PhD and are undergoing internship, eligibility period shall be extended for the duration of the internship after the date of PhD award. However, in any of the cases mentioned above the total time elapsed from the date of PhD award may not exceed 12 years.

- that bears the support of a Legal entity (Applicant).

Establishment of a research group and/or laboratory:

- a research group shall be established in the first year of implementation,
- the establishment and development of the research group will be monitored, with the support of the Institution, on the basis of efficacy in developing a new research topic and/or methodology, publishing papers in high-quality journals, international networking of researchers etc., applying to EU programmes and other competitive calls for research proposals during project implementation, and especially in the final two year of project implementation,
- the minimum number of research group members shall be three (including the Principal Investigator, senior research assistant whose employment is envisioned in the proposed Financial Plan, research assistant and/or senior research assistant who is already employed or research assistant who would be employed through the Young Researchers' Career Development Project),
- In the first year, the group may comprise of only two members if the Work Plan provides for the enlargement of the group for the purpose of achieving project objectives,
- throughout the duration of the project, the research group may comprise only of members who acquired their PhD not more than 10 years before the closing date of the Call, senior research assistant, research assistants and students,
- other researchers may be involved in project implementation, but they shall not be considered research group members.

End beneficiaries of funds are the Principal Investigator and team members. One researcher may be a Principal Investigator of only one project funded by HRZZ (with the exception of ERA-NET and Weave projects). One researcher may hold a maximum of two active roles in projects funded by HRZZ – i.e. Principal Investigator on one project and team member on another project or team member on two projects. The cut-off date for determining active roles is **1 July 2025**.

Funding

Total budget of a single project over a five-year period may not exceed **300,000 EUR**, while the minimum project budget should be **125,000 EUR**. First-year budget may not exceed **90,000 EUR**.

Categories of eligible expenses:

- research costs,
- equipment purchase and maintenance (up to 59,999 EUR),
- dissemination, training and collaboration (up to 15,000 EUR per year),
- costs of open access publications (up to 25,000 EUR),
- salary costs (for a higher research assistant),
- indirect costs – up to 15% of funds requested in categories 1-4 per reporting period, excluding salary costs.

The project budget (Financial Plan) should be prepared to reflect the realistic needs of the project. Expenditures in the Financial Plan should be distributed over five twelve-month periods.

If a portion of the project proposal submitted to this Call is already funded from another source or has been submitted to another call, the Applicant should provide in the Application Form all relevant information regarding the portions of the proposal that are funded from other sources (equipment, specific activities, etc.), as well as the sources, duration of funding and amount. This information will not be evaluated but is relevant for avoiding the risk of double funding. In case of a significant overlap with the other project, HRZZ may decide to deny funding for the project proposal. Proposals submitted under the Weave initiative must also indicate the total amount of funding requested from partner institutions. The final version of the Financial Plan shall be approved by HRZZ prior to contracting, following a verification of proposed expenditures and alignment of the Work and Financial Plan with HRZZ's general acts.

Only those research activities which have no other sources of funding may be funded (double financing must be avoided).

Content of the application and submission procedure

Project proposals are to be written on the provided application forms and submitted in electronic format through the Electronic Proposal Submission system (hereinafter: EPP), which can be accessed through HRZZ's website at the link: <https://epp.hrzz.hr/>.

All application documents are submitted in both Croatian and English. The Applicant shall be responsible for the identity of content of both language versions. The Croatian Science Foundation shall not be held responsible for any differences.

Project proposals must be complete and submitted in the electronic system by the deadline specified in the Call. All team members should be registered in the EPP system prior to submitting the proposal. **A single researcher may have only one profile in the EPP system.**

The Croatian Science Foundation will take all necessary measures to ensure availability of the proposal submission system. However, we urge all applicants not to submit their project proposals immediately before the submission deadline, when the system load is high, which could affect the submission process.

Incomplete proposals and proposals submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

Mandatory documents:

- **Administrative Form** – is completed directly in the EPP system. Upon completion, the Form should be printed out, validated and uploaded into the system.

The Administrative Form shall describe the support of the Legal entity to the project proposal, describing what conditions have been secured for establishing a research group or laboratory and support to meeting the Call objectives. The Administrative Form should bear the signature of the head of the legal entity (Applicant) and its official stamp.

- **Application Form**, consisting of the following parts:
 - a. Part A - contains a detailed description of the project proposal,
 - b. Part B - contains the Principal Investigator's CV and track record in the last five years,
 - c. Part C - contains a description of project management, risk analysis, list of research team members, their CVs and project tasks.

- **Financial Plan/Budget Form** contains the elaboration of the required financial resources related to each objective and activity in the Work Plan.
- **Work Plan** shall include an overview of the deliverables in terms of objectives, their sequence and timing, and the team members that will implement them.
- **Research Data Management Plan (DMP)** describes how Principal Investigators will store data generated during the research and what will happen to it after the project is completed.
- **Copy of PhD degree** and proof of current employment or future employment at Legal entity
- **Documentation** demonstrating career breaks (if applicable).

Additional documents

- Ethical clearance (depending on nature of research). Ethical clearance from the Applicant should be delivered upon submission of proposal, while in cases where clearance from a higher-level entity is required, proof that the application has been sent for approval should be submitted before the contracting stage.
- Signed letter of intent to participate in the proposed project for all team members who are not employed by the Applying Organization. Letter of Intent for a research group member shall be signed by the Head of the Institution and the team member. In case a team member is employed outside of Croatia, the letter of intent shall be signed only by the team member.
- Other research-oriented legal entities should deliver proof that they employ at least five PhD holders for at least one year.

Eligibility check

Upon closure of the Call for Proposals, HRZZ will conduct an eligibility check of the submitted proposals. HRZZ may request clarifications and minor corrections from the Applicant, but subsequent submission of documents will not be possible. Clarifications and minor corrections should be delivered within the set deadline of five working days. If the project proposal does not meet the eligibility check even after the clarifications or minor changes have been delivered or if they have not been delivered within the deadline, the project proposal will not be forwarded for evaluation. Proposals which contain plagiarised parts of text will be rejected in the eligibility check stage.

Evaluation

All proposals that passed the eligibility check are referred to peer review. Evaluation panel members nominate peer reviewers, who shall be mostly international experts and who shall evaluate proposals according to evaluation criteria that are available as part of the call documentation. HRZZ will secure three peer reviews for each proposal.

After the peer review, the members of the evaluation panel will give a final recommendation and opinion on the project proposals according to the criteria that are available as part of the call

documentation and draft a ranking list of proposals that shall serve as the basis for the funding recommendation presented to HRZZ Board. The estimated duration of the evaluation procedure is six months.

Reporting dynamics

The funding beneficiary shall be obliged to submit a financial and narrative report at the end of each project period as well as a report on dissemination activities.

Outside the regular reporting periods, the beneficiary may be asked by HRZZ to deliver an exceptional report supported by additional documentation.

Indicators for monitoring project impact

In order to assess the results and impact of the “Installation Research Projects” programme, the applicants shall allow access to information related to the project proposal. HRZZ shall ensure that the information is kept confidential and available only to persons that participate in the process of evaluating results and impact of the Programme. HRZZ will conduct post-implementation surveys to collect information for the purpose of evaluating results and impact of the Programme and monitoring indicators (e.g. publishing research results and impacts in open access, number of researchers included in project implementation, number of early-career researchers included in project implementation, newly acquired research equipment, project proposals submitted for new funding from EU or other international sources, networking, collaboration).

Application deadline

Deadline for submitting project proposals is **24 February 2025 until 13.00 (CST)**.

Contact and additional questions

All questions regarding this Call should be sent via e-mail to the following address: programi@hrzz.hr. Answers to questions received will be posted twice a week to HRZZ's website in the Q&A section. Before submitting a question to the email address above, Applicants should review the responses that have already been posted. Enquiries that have already been answered on the Foundation's website shall be considered answered.