



## Call for proposals “Research Projects”

*Call identifier: IP-2022-10*

*This Call has been prepared in accordance with the General Regulations of the Croatian Science Foundation. By applying to this call, you accept its implementation. The terms used in the masculine gender are neutral.*

## About the program

The Research Projects program funds basic research that creates new knowledge about a particular field or improves existing knowledge and aims to improve understanding of the research subject, as well as applied research conducted with clear technological, economic, or social objectives.

The proposed topic must be internationally recognized and/or of national significance, and the applicant must have an excellent track record. Projects supported under this call should be based on strong research teams formed at Croatian scientific institutions and whose principal investigators are internationally and nationally respected scientists. Consolidation of research is encouraged to increase the quality of research and create internationally competitive and recognized research groups. Under this Call, researchers can also apply for joint bilateral or trilateral projects with researchers from Slovenia (ARRS) and Switzerland (SNSF).

### The objectives of the call:

- Creation of new knowledge that will contribute to the strengthening of the Croatian economy and the welfare of society
- To encourage the establishment of links between researchers and the formation of recognizable research groups dealing with internationally and/or nationally significant topics, whose principal investigators are outstanding scientists with internationally recognized achievements
- Support research groups that can compete at the international level and scientists who have the potential to mentor a new generation of early career researchers
- Support international networking
- To develop scientific and research potential in Croatia.

#### About the Call:

**Call opening date: May 24 2022.**

**Call closing date:** Wednesday, October 5 2022. at 13:00 (CEST)

**The Call is open to all scientific fields.**

**Budget for the first year of project implementation:** HRK 30.000.000,00

**Duration of project:** 4 years

**Recommended start date:** September 2023. Projects should start no later than three months after receiving the notification to start negotiations on the work and Financial Plans to begin.

More detailed instructions can be found in the **Guidelines for Applicants to the Croatian Science Foundation's Calls.**

## The applicant (PI)

- The scientist responsible for the scientific research and management of the entire project.
- An active researcher (with a PhD degree, experience in project management, an active research group as evidenced by the list of achievements of the principal investigator, relevant publications and/or patents in the research field of the proposed project) with internationally recognized achievements and proven successful mentoring of young researchers.
- Permanently employed at a public university, a public research institute in the Republic of Croatia or another legal entity engaged in scientific activity and registered in the Register of Scientific Institutions of the Ministry of Science and Education, and fulfilling the minimum requirements set forth in the Regulation on the Conditions for Granting Permission to Conduct Scientific Activity, the Conditions for Reaccreditation of Scientific Institutions and the Content of the Permission (OG 83/10). The applicant may submit a project proposal only in the field for which the scientific institution where he/she is employed and where the project is to be carried out has been accredited
- Full members of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts may submit project proposals.
- An individual applicant may submit only one project proposal per call

The same researcher may simultaneously hold the status of principal investigator and/or team member on a maximum of two research projects and/or Installation Research Projects that have been proposed or are in progress, in such a way that he/she may be principal investigator on one project and team member on another project or team member on two projects. For this Call, the above rule does not apply to investigators who are Principal Investigators and/or Team Members of projects that end on September 1, 2023.

Principal Investigators of projects funded under the Tenure-Track Pilot Program are not eligible applicants but may be team members of an HRZZ-funded project.

(Co-)leaders of bilateral calls (IPS and IPCH) may participate in a maximum of two applied or ongoing research and/or facility research projects, and co-leadership of a bilateral project counts as an associate role.

### Institutional support

The competitiveness of the research group is not possible without the support of the scientific institution where the applicant is employed. Therefore, HRZZ supports projects with clearly defined and active support from the scientific institution where the proposed project will be carried out (adequate facilities, administrative support, existing scientific infrastructure, equipment provided to the Principal Investigator, etc.).

## Terms and Conditions for the call

Projects funded under this call should meet the following criteria:

- Projects that will be carried out over a 4-year period.
- Internationally competitive and nationally relevant issues and establishing links between scientific institutions and devices.
- Projects with a clear scientific contribution.
- Projects carried out by an active research group whose contribution is transparent and planned according to the project's work plan.

- Research that is strongly and unquestionably supported by a scientific institution.
- Relevant research that contributes to the development of science and society and to the creation of new knowledge and technologies. This includes new research that has not previously been conducted in any form or funded from other sources, including participation in longitudinal or long-term research conducted through collaboration in international partnerships or as part of international longitudinal research, or research already funded from other sources.
- Bilateral and trilateral proposals with researchers from Slovenia (ARRS) and Switzerland (SNF) within the [Weave](#)<sup>1</sup> initiative. Partner institutions should apply for this call through their national funding agencies.
- Projects must be consistent with the principles of research integrity.

Requests for reinstatement of an HRZZ-funded project must clearly demonstrate the development of research objectives. HRZZ will not support projects that duplicate the objectives of previously funded projects; this will be verified during evaluation.

No form of gender or other discrimination will be permitted in the application process for HRZZ Calls. Persons of both genders can apply for this competition under equal conditions.

The Croatian Science Foundation strongly supports and promotes gender equality, gender inclusion and the principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination.

All information provided in the application documents must be correct and complete and must be provided in the places provided for this purpose.

## Funding

The budget for the "Research Projects" call is HRK 30,000,000.00 for the first year of project implementation.<sup>2</sup>

**The funds should be evenly distributed over the entire period of project implementation and amount to 25% of the total amount per project year.**

The total funds requested should represent a realistic estimate of the research needs and be fully justifiable.

Maximum project funds: between HRK 1,000,000.00 and HRK 1,500,000.00, or between HRK 600,000.00 and HRK 900,000.00 in the case of projects in the social sciences and humanities. In the case of research groups with a larger number of researchers, the grant may be increased due to higher material costs for research or purchase of scientific equipment.

The minimum funding of a project, excluding personnel costs (Category 2 in the Financial Plan), shall be HRK 300,000.00.

Types of eligible expenses:

- Research costs.
- Personnel costs (employment of postdoctoral fellows);

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<sup>1</sup> The Weave initiative is based on the Lead Agency procedure. The goal is for two or more institutions from different countries to give researchers the opportunity to submit a joint research project proposal to one of the institutions (i.e., the Lead Agency). The Lead Agency in this Call is the Croatian Science Foundation (HRZZ). The institution to which the project proposal is submitted (HRZZ) will conduct the evaluation process according to the established procedures.

<sup>2</sup> As the projects are expected to be contracted in 2023, the official fixed conversion rate of the Croatian National Bank will be used for recalculating the financial plan and the overall budget of the program.

- Equipment purchases and maintenance costs (up to HRK 500,000.00 for the entire project)
- Dissemination, training, and collaboration costs (up to HRK 100,000.00 per year)
- Open access costs (do 100.000,00 HRK per project)
- Indirect costs – maximum 10% of total funds requested from HRZZ

Project proposals whose financial plans are not realistic, have not been clearly justified and do not have all institutional resources will be negatively evaluated.

Excessive expenditures may be a reason for rejecting a project proposal, even if it is of high quality in terms of content.

The project budget (Financial Plan) must be prepared to reflect the realistic needs of the project.

If the budget contains ineligible expenditures, the exclusion of which would jeopardize the implementation of the project, the proposal will not be funded.

The financial plan form should indicate the amounts to be funded by the partner institution, as provided in the financial plan form (for projects submitted under the Weave Initiative). The expenditures in the budget should be divided into four periods of 12 months each.

If the project proposal or portion of the proposal submitted for this Call is already funded from another source or has been submitted for another solicitation, the applicant must include in the Resources section of the application form, list all pertinent 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, i.e., it will not be considered an advantage or disadvantage to the proposer. However, an additional evaluation may be conducted prior to contract award to determine the feasibility of parallel implementation and duplicate funding. In the event of a significant overlap with the other project, the HRZZ may decide to deny funding for the project proposal. Projects submitted under the Weave Initiative must indicate the total amount of funding requested by partner institutions. **Any form of double funding is not allowed and will be considered a gross violation of the Foundation's rules.**

### Content of the application and submission procedure<sup>3</sup>

All documents related to the project proposal must be submitted on the application forms exclusively in electronic format through the Electronic Proposal Submission (EPP) system, which can be accessed through the HRZZ website or through the following link <https://epp.hrzz.hr/>.

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

All application documents are submitted in Croatian and English. The applicant of the project proposal is responsible for the content identity of the project proposal in both languages and the Croatian Science Foundation is not responsible for any differences.

Project proposals must be complete and entered the electronic system by the deadline specified in the Call. A researcher may have only one profile in the EPP system.

**Incomplete proposals and proposals not submitted by the deadline will not be considered.**

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<sup>3</sup> Before submitting a project proposal, you should read the instructions for submitting project proposals. The instructions can be found on the Foundation's website at [www.hrzz.hr](http://www.hrzz.hr).

## **Mandatory content of the application:**

- 1. The Administrative Form<sup>4</sup>** contains basic information about the applicant(s), a detailed summary, and the support of the institution; it must contain the handwritten signatures of the project leader (PI) and the head of the institution in the Republic of Croatia, as well as the seal of the institution. The evaluation in the first round will be based on this form, which must contain all important information about the project proposal (including the support of the scientific institution where the applicant is employed).
- 2. The Application Form** consisting of:
  - o Part A - contains a detailed description of the project proposal
  - o Part B - contains the CV of the project leader (PI), a track record of achievements in the last five years, which includes the most important works on which the project leader is the lead author and other relevant achievements
  - o Part C - contains a description of project management, a list of members of the research group, their CVs, and their responsibilities.
- 3. The Financial Plan/Budget Form** contains the elaboration of the required financial resources related to each objective and activity in the work plan. For bilateral and trilateral projects carried out under the Weave initiative, it is necessary to indicate the total funds requested by the partner institutions, according to the financial plan form
- 4. The Work Plan** must include an overview of the deliverables in terms of objectives, their sequence and timing, and the staff that will implement them.
- 5. The Research Data Management Plan (RMP)<sup>5</sup>** describes how project leaders will store data generated during the research and what will happen to it after the project is completed. Sharing research data increases visibility, publication citations, and collaboration among researchers. The form will not be evaluated in this Call.

## **Supporting documents:**

- Certificate of Research Ethics.
- Signed letter of intent to participate in the proposed project for all employees who are not employed by the project institution (the letter of intent of the employee from Croatia is signed by the head of the institution and the employee; the letter of intent of the employee from abroad is signed by the employee). Letters of intent are not submitted for employees applying for bilateral and trilateral projects in the role of a research partner group.
- For bilateral and trilateral projects, a letter of support from the partner institutions must be submitted with a list of equipment (valued at more than 5,000.00 Euros) and key resources to be used for project implementation, as per the template.<sup>6</sup>
- Other documentation (if applicable).

## **All documents listed in items 1 - 5 are mandatory for all project applicants. Incomplete applications will not be considered.**

Upon completion of the Call for Proposals, the HRZZ will conduct an administrative review of the applications received to determine if complete documentation was submitted by the deadline. If changes are required, HRZZ will request them from applicant (PI). Amendments can be submitted once upon the request of the Croatian Science Foundation and within the set deadline of five

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<sup>4</sup> For bilateral and trilateral projects, The Administrative Form should include basic information about the partner research group leaders.

<sup>5</sup> RMP is mandatory part of application documents, but not subject to evaluation.

<sup>6</sup> Mandatory documentation for bilateral and trilateral project proposals.

working days. If the project proposal does not meet the administrative review even after the submitted changes or if the changes are not submitted within the deadline, the project proposal will not be forwarded for review.

## Evaluation

Croatian and international experts are involved in the evaluation of project proposals.

The evaluation process includes the following steps:

1. Project proposals that meet the administrative review, have complete and duly certified documentation and meet the Call conditions are submitted for evaluation.
2. The members of the evaluation panel evaluate the project proposals based on the evaluation criteria for the "Research Projects" call, deadline 2022-10. the evaluation in the first round is based on the administrative form and the Work and Financial plan.
3. Positively evaluated project proposals will be forwarded for peer review (grade A in the first-round evaluation form).
4. The evaluation of the project proposals is carried out by international experts based on the entire project documentation, according to the evaluation criteria for the call "Research Projects", call deadline 2022-10.
5. After the evaluation, the members of the evaluation panel will give a final opinion on the project proposals, considering the additional criteria specified in the evaluation form C.

Upon completion of the evaluation, the panels will rank the projects, which will be the basis for recommending funding for the project proposals. The estimated duration of the evaluation is seven to nine months.

The evaluation criteria can be found on the Foundation's website at [www.hrzz.hr](http://www.hrzz.hr).

Applicants have the right to appeal the Board's decisions, which must be substantiated and clear within eight working days of receiving notification of the Board's decision. Until the Complaints Commission is established in accordance with the Croatian Science Foundation Act (OG 57/22), the Board of Directors of the Croatian Science Foundation is responsible for the Complaints Commission.

Researchers from the Republic of Croatia may submit a joint proposal to the Croatian Science Foundation, which acts as the *Lead Agency* and evaluates the submitted project proposal according to the prescribed evaluation criteria, while the partner institutions accept the lead agency's decisions.<sup>7</sup> For project proposals that are part of the Weave Initiative, an evaluation process will be carried out according to the prescribed evaluation criteria of the Croatian Science Foundation.

**Under the terms of the Weave Initiative agreement, 20% of the top-ranked project proposals in each ranking will receive funding in the areas of life sciences, natural and technical sciences, and social sciences and humanities.**

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<sup>7</sup>Since 2021, the Croatian Science Foundation has integrated the Weave initiative into its research project program. Croatian researchers who meet the requirements of the Croatian Science Fund can apply for a joint bilateral or trilateral project with researchers from Slovenia (ARRS) and Switzerland (SNF) who meet the requirements of ARRS and SNF.

## Deadline for submission of project proposals

The deadline for submission of project proposals is October 5, 2022, at 1:00 p.m. (CEST). No project proposals can be submitted after this deadline, so **we encourage all applicants to submit their proposals on time.**

### Contact

Inquiries regarding this Call will be answered only by e-mail to the following address: [istrazivacki@hrzz.hr](mailto:istrazivacki@hrzz.hr). Answers to questions received will be posted twice weekly in the "Frequently Asked Questions" available to all applicants on the HRZZ website. Applicants should review the available responses before submitting a request to the email address provided. Inquiries that have already been answered on the Foundation's website are considered answered.