



Ministero dell'università e della ricerca

Segretariato
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**COMPETITIVE PROCEDURE SUPPORTING FUNDAMENTAL RESEARCH
ACTIVITIES FINANCED BY THE ITALIAN SCIENCE FUND**

THE DIRECTOR GENERAL

HAVING REGARD TO article 12 of Law no. 241 of 7 August 1990, concerning measures conferring economic advantages;

HAVING REGARD TO Decree-Law no. 1 of 19 January 2020 (Official Journal, General Series, no. 6 of 9 January 2020), 'Urgent provisions for the establishment of the Ministry of Education and of the Ministry of University and Research, converted, with amendments, into Law no. 12 of 5 March 2020;

HAVING REGARD TO Prime Ministerial Decree no. 164 of 30 September 2020 (Official Journal, General Series no. 309 of 14 December 2020) 'Regulation on the Organisation of the Ministry of University and Research (hereinafter also referred to as MUR), and Prime Ministerial Decree no. 165 of 30 September 2020 (Official Journal, General Series no. 309 of 14 December 2020) 'Regulation on the Organisation of the Direct Collaboration Offices of the Minister of University and Research';

HAVING REGARD TO the Ministerial Decree of 19 February 2021 (Official Journal, General Series, no. 74 of 26 March 2021) identifying and defining the tasks of the Executive MUR Offices;

HAVING REGARD TO Law no. 296 of 27 December 2006, 'Provisions for the formation of the annual and multi-year State budget', with particular regard to article 1, paragraphs 870-873, concerning the establishment and use of the Fund for Investments in Scientific and Technological Research (hereinafter also referred to as FIRST), and Decree-Law no. 83 of 22 June 2012, converted with amendments into Law no. 134 of 7 August 2012 (Ordinary Supplement no. 171, Official Journal no. 187 of 11 August 2012), articles 60 and 61;

HAVING REGARD TO Law no. 240 of 30 December 2010, and subsequent amendments, containing 'Rules on the organisation of universities, faculty staff and recruitment, and the assigned Government responsibility as to enhance quality and efficiency of the university framework – as to articles 20 and 21, amended by article 64 of Decree-Law No. 77 of 31 May 2021, 'Governance of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan and initial measures to strengthen administrative



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structures and accelerate and streamline procedures' (Official Journal, General Series, no. 129 of 31 May 2021 - Extraordinary Edition);

HAVING REGARD TO the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, with regard to articles 182(1) and 183;

HAVING REGARD TO Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulations (EU) no. 1290/2013 and (EU) no. 1291/2013;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT Council Decision (EU) 2021/764 of 10 May 2021 establishing the Specific Programme implementing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, and repealing Decision 2013/743/EU, article 8(4) and (5) and Annex 1, Pillar I, point 1 - European Research Council;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty, as well as Communication from the Commission — 'Framework for State aid for research and development and innovation (OJ C 198 of 27 June 2014)', with reference to the specific provisions concerning fundamental research;

HAVING REGARD TO Decree-Law no. 73 of 25 May 2021 on 'Urgent measures, related to the COVID-19 emergency, for businesses, employment, young people, health and territorial services' (Official Journal, General Series No. 123 of 25 May 2021), converted, with amendments into Law No. 106 of 23 July 2021 (Official Journal, General Series, no. 176 of 24 July 2021 - Ordinary Supplement no. 25);

CONSIDERED that, in order to promote the development of fundamental research, article 61 of the aforesaid Decree-Law, as converted into Law no. 106 of 23 July 2021, establishes the 'Italian Science Fund' in the draft budgetary plan of the Ministry of University and Research, with an annual budget of 50 million euros for the year 2021 and 150 million euros as of 2022; establishing that criteria and procedures for the allocation of the fund are adopted with a decree by the Ministry of University and Research within ninety days from the date of entry into force of the Decree-Law;



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HAVING REGARD TO Ministerial Decree no. 841 of 15 July 2021 ‘Procedural provisions for the support of fundamental research activities under the Italian Science Fund, as per Decree-Law no. 73 of 25 May 2021, registered with no. 2286 by the Court of Auditors (*Corte dei Conti*) on 09/08/2021;

HAVING REGARD TO Decree-Law no. 77 of 31 May 2021, converted with amendments into Law no. 108 of 20 July 2021 (Official Journal, General Series, no. 181 of 30 July 2021 – Ordinary Supplement no. 26), article 64, establishing the National Committee for Research Evaluation, (hereinafter also referred to as CNVR);

CONSIDERED that the funding of this procedure is covered by the Italian Science Fund 2021, in the novel expense chapter 7720 of the draft budgetary plan of the Ministry of University and Research;

DECREES

Article 1

Definitions

For the purposes of this Procedure (hereinafter also referred to as “call for proposals”) the following definitions apply:

- Minister and Ministry refer - respectively - to the Minister and the Ministry of University and Research (MUR);
- ERC refers to the European Research Council;
- ERC domains LS (Life sciences), PE (Physical Sciences and Engineering) and SH (Social Sciences and Humanities) - and related sectors and sub-sectors refer to the latest version of the ERC panel structure at the date of project proposals’ submission;
- CNVR refers to the National Committee for Research Evaluation, as defined in article 64 of Decree-Law no. 77 of 31 May 2021 converted, with amendments, into Law 29 July 2021 no. 108;



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- Expert refers to independent experts identified by the CNVR for project evaluation purposes, pursuant to art. 64 of Decree-Law no. 77 of 31 May 2021, converted, with amendments, into Law 29 July 2021 no. 108;
- Host Organisation, or Host Institution, refers to a university, a public research body, a legal entity established for research purposes (receiving ordinary state contributions and included in the list of public administrations as to article 1, paragraph 3 of Law no. 196 of 31 December 2009) or a Scientific Institute for Research, Hospitalisation and Healthcare - IRCCS (pursuant to article 4, paragraph 4, of Ministerial Decree no. 841 of 15 July 2021) chosen by the Principal Investigator as the principal site of his/her research activities related to the research project;
- Principal Investigator (hereinafter also referred to as PI) refers to an Italian or foreign researcher, independently of their legal status, in charge of the coordination of the research activities and project team ;
- proposing party refers to the Principal Investigator submitting the project proposal;
- beneficiary refers to all eligible subjects pursuant article 4, paragraph 4, of Ministerial Decree no. 841 of 15 July 2021, to which the funding is awarded and on the premises of which the project is conducted;
- personnel refers to human resources of: Universities (researchers, postdoctoral researchers, doctoral students and other professional figures identified in article 18, paragraph 5, Law no. 240 of 30 December 2010 and subsequent amendments), teaching personnel (“prima fascia” and “seconda fascia”) of AFAM- Higher Education institutions, researchers, “tecnologi” and postdoctoral researchers from public research bodies, personnel in functions similar to those of researchers and “tecnologi” part of legal entities with established research purposes and to which the State grants ordinary funding (among those included in the list of public administrations pursuant to article 1, paragraph 3 of Law n. 196 of 31 December 2009 and subsequent amendments), as well as personnel belonging to medical and health profiles of the IRCCS (with permanent-term or ad hoc established contracts and participating in projects financed by the present call for proposals).



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Article 2

Applicants and beneficiaries

1. Project proposals may be submitted by eligible Principal Investigators of any nationality, who have chosen one of the Italian Institutions as their Host Institution, included in the categories specified in below mentioned paragraph 2.
2. The entities eligible as beneficiaries of the present call for proposals and funding are listed in article 4, paragraph 4 of Ministerial Decree no. 841 of 15 July 2021 (Academies of Fine Arts, Conservatories and, Italian, state and non-state Universities and university institutes, , including specialized higher education institutes (*Scuole Superiori ad Ordinamento Speciale*); “enti pubblici di ricerca” pursuant to Legislative Decree no. 218 of 25 November 2016; legal entities with research purposes, provided they are based in Italy, with a permanent venue located within the national territory, which receive ordinary state contributions; public or private Scientific Institutes for Research, Hospitalisation and Healthcare institutes having their operational headquarters within the national territory).
3. Principal Investigators not yet employed, on permanent or temporary basis, at the host institution, need to formalize an ad hoc contract after the project ranking publication.

Article 3

Eligibility requirements

Fundamental research projects shall be eligible for the present Call for proposals provided they are conducted at one of the Host Institutions referred to in article 2, paragraph 2, and comply with the requirements described in the following articles and with the specifications related to the following two funding schemes:

- a) Starting Grant: fundamental research projects conducted by emerging researchers;
- b) Advanced Grants: fundamental research projects conducted by established researchers.



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Article 4

Areas of intervention, characteristics of projects, specific requirements to access the call for proposals procedure and funding

1. Project proposals may cover all research fields relating to the domains and scientific-disciplinary fields included in the ERC, as listed in Annex 1 which forms an integral part of the present call for proposals.

2. Starting Grant Scheme

Projects coordinated by a researcher at the beginning of his/her career (PI Junior), holding a PhD degree awarded no less than 2 years and no more than 10 years prior to the date of publication of this Procedure on the MUR website, demonstrating their scientific independence potential, to be highlighted in the project proposal.

Profile of the Principal Investigator - Starting Grant

- Doctoral degree or specialisation in the medical sector

The Principal Investigator must have obtained the first PhD (or equivalent qualification) at least 2 years before and no longer than 10 years prior to the date of publication of the Procedure on the MUR website.

Eligibility periods may be extended in the case of adequately documented career interruptions occurred within the time limit referred to in paragraph 1. In this respect, the following circumstances are admissible a) maternity leave (18 months extension of the time limit set for the first PhD award for each child born before or after obtaining the doctoral degree); b) paternity leave (extension of the time limit set for the first PhD award by the actual amount of time spent on paternity leave for each child born before or after obtaining the PhD); c) long-term periods of illness (more than 90 days), clinical training or national service (the time limit set for the first PhD is extended by the actual amount of leave taken for each event occurring after the PhD award).



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In the specific context of the LS domain, a PI with a medical specialisation without a doctoral degree complies with the minimum eligibility requirement for this Call for proposals.

If the PI holds more than one doctoral degree or equivalent title, calculation of the time elapsed since the award shall refer to the earliest title that makes the applicant eligible.

For the purposes of calculating time elapsed since the award of the eligible title, the award date of the doctoral degree (or medical specialisation) shall mean the date of discussion of the relevant thesis.

- Scientific independence and track record

A Starting Grant Principal Investigator must show the potential for research independence and evidence of scientific maturity, having produced at least two major publications as main author or without the participation of their PhD supervisor.

The Principal Investigator must be able to demonstrate a promising track record, giving evidence on the following in the project proposal:

- publications, as main author, in major international peer-reviewed scientific journals, including multidisciplinary scientific journals;
- publications, as co-author, of contributions to peer-reviewed edited volumes or monographs relevant to the project proposal research field;
- a record of presentations (on invitation) in well-established conferences, including international ones, and in internationally renowned *schools*;
- patents;
- Recognitions of scientific results including international awards;
- periods abroad and international collaborations.

Maximum grant and project duration

Projects selected under the Starting Grant scheme will be awarded a capital grant for the total eligible costs for up to a maximum amount of € 1 million per project.



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For project proposals in the LS (Life Sciences) and PE (Physical Sciences and Engineering) domains, PI's may request an additional funding to purchase equipment for up to a maximum of €500,000.

The maximum duration of the projects is 5 years.

The grant is awarded to the host institution which shall guarantee - by means of a commitment letter, signed by its legal representative or delegated person – assuring appropriate conditions for the PI to independently direct the research and manage the funds for the duration of the project.

3. **Advanced Grant Scheme**

Projects, including high-risk projects, potentially able to open new perspectives also at interdisciplinary level, coordinated by a researcher well established in his/her field (PI Senior), independently of his/her nationality, 65-year-old at the most at the deadline of this Call for proposals.

Profile of the Principal Investigator - Advanced Grant

In addition to being scientifically independent, the Principal Investigator must have been actively engaged in research for over ten years, as well as holding a profile that identifies him/her as a leader in the project proposal research field.

- Scientific leadership and track record (related to the last 10 years)

The Principal Investigator must provide evidence that he/she has achieved results within the relevant field of research by reaching at least two of the following criterion , one for each set of benchmarks (1 and 2)

1.

- a. 10 publications as main author (or as co-author, for scientific fields where alphabetical authorship is the norm) in major international scientific journals, including peer-reviewed interdisciplinary scientific journals;



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- b. 3 major research monographs, relating to fields of research where publication of monographs is considered the rule;
- c. 5 patents.

2.

- a. 30 presentations (on invitation) in conferences organised at international level and in Advanced Schools;
- b. 3 research projects led by the PI;
- c. 3 well established international conferences or congresses in which the PI has been involved as a member of the steering committee or as organiser;
- d. international awards such as scientific or artistic awards, admission to reputable academies or project commissioning (e.g. architectural or engineering design);
- e. recognised leadership in the field of industrial innovation.

Maximum grant and project duration

Projects selected under the Advanced Grant scheme will be awarded a capital grant corresponding for the total eligible costs, for up to a maximum amount of € 1.5 million per project.

For proposals in the LS (Life Sciences) and PE (Physical sciences and Engineering) domains, PIs may apply for additional funding to purchase equipment; this contribution may not exceed 500,000 euros.

The maximum duration of the projects is 5 years.

The funding is awarded to the host institution, which shall guarantee - by means of a commitment letter signed by its legal representative or delegated person – assuring adequate conditions for the PI to independently direct the research and manage the funds for the duration of the project,



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Article 4 bis

Eligible costs

1. The grant may be awarded for up to 100% of total eligible costs.
2. Project eligible costs shall relate to the costs actually incurred by the beneficiary to implement the proposed research activities, provided they are in line with eligibility criteria and ceilings as listed in Article 6 of Ministerial Decree no. 841 of 15 July 2021 and in the '*Linee guida per la rendicontazione e la determinazione delle spese ammissibili*', published on www.gea.mur.gov.it in due time for the submission of project proposals.
3. Project duration shall not exceed 60 months.
The fraction of a year exceeding 6 months shall be considered as a full year.
4. It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to indicate the total amount requested for the project when submitting the application.
5. The start date of the project shall be set at a date subsequent to the grant award decree, no later than 45 days from the date of publication of the grant award Decree on the MUR website.
The deadline for Project start date may be postponed for a maximum of 150 days in the event of documented and recognised force majeure events, subject to verification and authorisation by the MUR.
6. Costs are eligible if incurred as of Project start date.
7. The following cost items are eligible
 - a. personnel: costs relating to the person/months of personnel recruited ad hoc for the research project:
 - 1) by Universities (researchers, post-doctoral researchers, doctoral students and other professional figures identified in article 18, paragraph 5, of law no. 240 of 30 December 2010 and subsequent amendments), as well as teaching personnel ("*prima fascia*" and "*seconda fascia*") of AFAM - Higher Education institutions;
 - 2) by enti pubblici di ricerca (researchers, research facilitators or "*tecnologi*" and postdoctoral researchers);



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- 3) by legal entities with research purposes receiving ordinary state contributions, eligible pursuant to art. 4, paragraph 4, letter c) of Ministerial Decree no. 841 of 15 July 2021 (personnel carrying out activities equivalent to those of researchers and fellows)
- 4) IRCCSs (medical and healthcare staff).

Costs incurred for PI contracts are also eligible provided that the Principal Investigator is employed on a temporary basis by the host organisations for the duration of the project;

- b. capital expenditure costs for the purchase of instruments and equipment;
- c. other operating costs, including but not limited to: consumables, access to research infrastructures, publication of books, missions abroad and participation in training and/or dissemination events abroad, provided they are specifically incurred for the purposes of the project and are strictly related to it;
- d. costs for scientific and technical consulting services used exclusively for the purposes of the project;
- e. indirect costs for an amount equal to 20% of the project's total direct costs. The basis for calculating the above percentage is the sum of all costs listed in letters a), b) and c) of this article, with the exception of costs referred to in letter d).

Article 5

Budget and conditionality

1. Total funding allocated for the Procedure is € 50 million, with a budget allocation of € 20 for the Starting Grant Scheme and € 30 million for the Advanced Grant Scheme.
2. Each allocation referred to in paragraph 1 of this article shall be equally distributed among ERC domains, in proportion to the total costs of the project proposals submitted within each domain, without prejudice to the provisions of art. 3, paragraph 5, of Ministerial Decree no. 841 of 15 July 2021.
3. The MUR reserves the right:



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- to award funding to the next in line in the ranking list of eligible projects that qualified for funding, should a PI who has been awarded funding withdraw, or should new funds become available, funding shall be awarded;
- to use any resulting savings to increase funding of subsequent Procedures under the Italian Science Fund, by means of a specific measure/act.

Articles 6

Portability

1. The *Principal Investigator* may avail her/himself of portability to another University, *ente pubblico di ricerca*, IRCCS (Medical and Healthcare Institutes) and any other entity among those eligible for the Procedure, by notifying the Ministry of University and Research (MUR), through the dedicated section of the portal.
2. Host Institutions involved in the project shall be responsible for reporting the expenses actually incurred.
3. If the *Principal Investigator* transfers to an entity not eligible for the Procedure, including foreign institutions, the MUR will revoke the contribution granted, will claim the return of the sums disbursed or enforce the guarantee, in the cases referred to in article 9, paragraph 2 below.

Article 7

Submission, Processing, and Evaluation of Applications

1. Application Submission

The application shall be submitted by the PI, who holds the scientific responsibility for the project in conjunction with and on behalf of the Host Institution, which is the applicant legal entity.

Applications must be submitted in English, or shall be otherwise excluded as inadmissible, and exclusively via the web platform dedicated to the call for Proposals.

Submission to the call opens on:



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- 26 October 2021 (12:00 CET +1)

and closes on

- 27 December 2021 (12:00 CET+1)

The MUR shall not be liable for failure or incomplete submission of proposals within the time limits set. Once the proposal has been completed and submitted, no further corrections or re-submissions will be possible.

Proposals must be submitted electronically via the dedicated web platform at (www.gea.mur.gov.it) published on the MUR website (www.mur.gov.it).

Applications must be submitted in English and include the following distinct parts:

- **Part A (The Administrative form)**

- Proposal Title and Acronym;
- Proposal abstract: max 2.000 characters;
- Details of *PI* and Host Institution;
- Keywords and relevant ERC Domain of the proposal, the sector and subsector, based on the ERC classification existing at the time of the opening of this call;
- Summary budget table;
- Table with other funding and related PI time commitment;
- Binding declaration (commitment letter) as to the support of the Host Institution, signed by the legal representative or delegated person;
- Ethics-related statement.

- **Part B:**

- Proposal Summary, including relevant sectors and sub-sectors additional to the ones listed in Part A: max 6.000 characters;
- Only for the Starting Grant scheme: description of activities conducted during the doctoral program and other documentation needed to prove the applicant's eligibility and any possible extension of the period elapsed from the date when the applicant's degree was earned.



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- Curriculum Vitae of the PI on the template provided by MUR (max 3.600 characters);
 - Track record: max 3.500 characters (for the Advanced Grant scheme, the track record must cover the activities of the last 10 years only). The track record must include ORCID, SCOPUS ID or researcher ID, for sectors where applicable.
- **Part C:**
- scientific proposal (detailed description of the research activity, its methods, objectives, state-of-the-art in its domain, research methodology selected, project timeline, level of innovation of the project beyond the state-of-the-art): max 18.000 characters;
 - human resources and time commitment (the PI time commitment cannot be less than 50% within the Starting Grant scheme and 30% within the Advanced Grant scheme): max 3.600 characters;
 - detailed budget plan (breakdown of project costs by expenditure item and related time schedule): max 3.600 characters;
 - indication and explanation of the relevant ethical issues of the project. (max. 3,600 characters).

The number of characters is inclusive of spaces.

For all the self-certifications, in case of project admission, MUR will verify the declared and, whenever necessary, will request the relevant documentation. Verified false declarations will incur in the termination of the grant by MUR, without prejudice to personal civil and criminal liability.

It is possible to modify a proposal until the call deadline if the submission procedure has not been finalized.

Without prejudice to the possibility for the MUR to use the *soccorso istruttorio*, no document may be submitted after the deadline for the submission of proposals.

Incomplete proposals (where parts or sections of the proposal are missing) will be considered ineligible and will not be evaluated.



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Each Principal Investigator may submit only one proposal under this Call for Proposals and may not take part in the scientific activities conducted by another PI in the framework of other projects financed by the Italian Science Fund.

The MUR accepts no liability for the loss of, or delayed receipt of communications due to incorrect or incomplete indication of the email address by the applicant, nor for any computer errors attributable to third parties, unforeseeable circumstances or *force majeure*.

2. Proceedings and Evaluation Process of Applications.

For all applications received within the deadlines specified in paragraph 1 of this article, the procedure includes the following steps:

- I. Eligibility: proposals are admitted with reservation. Applications accepted for funding will subsequently be scrutinized to verify that the administrative formal documentation is complete and has been submitted in full compliance with all subjective and objective requirements and timing as mandated in the Procedure (Part A of the proposal). The MUR conducts this preliminary scrutiny.
- II. Evaluation: The evaluation of the proposals consists in two separate phases, described below. In each step and for each criterion, scores are integers on an increasing quality scale where 1 represents the lowest quality.

The first phase of evaluation of the proposals will be conducted by CNVR, which may rely on the assistance of external experts, recruited by the Committee itself among highly qualified experts in the areas for which additional expertise is needed. CNVR may consult databases, such as Clarivate and Scopus, for the recruitment of such experts. The external experts recruited by the CNVR will be included in a list established at the MUR, subject to a declaration on the absence of conflicts of interest.



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1. In the first phase, part B of the project proposal will be evaluated (summary of the project, *curriculum vitae*, *Phd details* - for the Starting Grant scheme- and *track record* of the Principal Investigator, verified through consultation of the databases and indexes identified by the CNVR).

The criteria, determined by CNVR, for the assignment of score-points to the summaries of project proposals, to *track records* and *curricula*, are indicated below.

Score-points are assigned on a 1 to 10 scale.

Project Summary: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Quality of proposal: objectives, method- Quality of proposal: expected results and impact	<i>1- 10</i>
PI Curriculum Vitae <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Scientific independence (for Starting Grant) or leadership in research (for Advanced Grant)- Main results obtained by the candidate	<i>1- 10</i>
<i>Max total points</i>	<i>20</i>

The sum of the points assigned for each item is the total score assigned to the proposals in the first phase of the evaluation process. Proposals that do not reach a total score of at least 18/20 will not be admitted to the subsequent evaluation phase.

1. A PI of a proposal failing to pass the first evaluation stage will be considered ineligible for the subsequent procedure funded under the Italian Science Fund.
2. The second stage of evaluation will involve the assessment of the project proposal as a whole (part C of the proposal) and will comply with the provisions set out by the CNVR and described in this Call for Proposals. The CNVR recruits three anonymous and independent external reviewers for each project, chosen among highly qualified scientists also, where applicable, after consulting databases such as Clarivate and Scopus.



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The external experts recruited by the CNVR will be included in a list established at the MUR, subject to a declaration on the absence of conflicts of interest.

Each external auditor assigns scores for each item through the Procedure electronics system, as indicated below. External auditors work remotely.

<i>Scientific proposal</i>	
- <i>Level of innovation of the proposal in relation to the state of the art and degree of interdisciplinarity, where relevant.</i>	<i>1-10</i>
- <i>Suitability of methodology, relevance of objectives and ethical aspects.</i>	<i>1-5</i>
<i>Human resources</i>	
<i>Suitability of the research team and of the time commitment indicated.</i>	<i>1-5</i>
<i>Budgeting, suitability of resources required</i>	
<i>Suitability of planning in the management of project activities</i> <i>Suitability of the host institution resources.</i>	<i>1-5</i>
<i>Maximun score</i>	<i>25</i>

The final score, which will be assigned by the CNVR, results from the arithmetic average of the overall scores assigned to the project by each independent evaluator.

The Principal Investigator whose project obtains a score exceeding the minimum threshold of 22/25 points (twenty-two over twenty-five) in the second phase, will be invited for an interview in English. Aimed at assessing the PI's ability to conduct research independently and/or coordinate the research team, the interview will consist in a Q&A session (following the presentation in English of the project by the PI) with members of the CNVR, assisted by experts if needed.



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Such experts must be different from the experts participating in phase two of the evaluation process. Prior to the interviews, the CNVR collects the documentation related to phase two of the evaluation from the independent experts.

The interview can be scored with points from 1 to 10.

3. For each project, the scores of the items listed below are calculated in a sum:
 - 1) score assigned in phase one of the evaluation process;
 - 2) arithmetic average of the scores assigned by the three auditors in phase two of evaluation process;
 - 3) score assigned to the interview.

The sum of the scores is the final score.

After the interviews, the CNVR produces rankings of the projects for each Macrosector, based on the final scores assigned to the proposals, and within the limits of the available resources.

For each proposal the CNVR determines the suitable cost and financing measure for the requests submitted, based on the analysis previously completed during the evaluation of the project.

If the total costs of the projects are not deemed adequate, they may be remodulated up to a maximum of 20%. Remodulation does not apply to personnel costs, which are linked to employment contracts constraints.

4. If resources are not sufficient to finance all projects classified "equal merit" for the score obtained, the CNVR will make a choice based on the interview score.
5. Both final scores obtained, and evaluation forms will be available to the PI.
6. The MUR shall publish the approval decrees of the rankings divided according to Macrosectors. The approval decrees of the score-based projects rankings, identified by Macrosector, contain the following details:



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A) projects eligible for funding, until the available resources are exhausted;

B) projects eligible but not qualifying for funding due to exhaustion of resources.

The approval decrees of the rankings also include:

- projects excluded from funding, as they have not reached the minimum score of eligibility to be admitted to the contribution;
- projects not eligible for merit assessment.

With a subsequent act, the MUR shall ensure the publication of the decrees of admission to the financing and disbursement of contributions to the projects referred to in point A) of this paragraph.

Article 8

Costs of Evaluation

Pursuant to art. 64, paragraph 6, of Law-Decree no. 77 of 31 May 2021 costs for evaluation and the use of external experts as well as any reimbursement of any related expenses, are covered by the Fund for the evaluation and valorization of research projects, referred to in article 1, paragraph 550, Law no.178 of 30 December 2020.

Article 9

Disbursement of Contribution

1. The MUR shall provide beneficiaries with the contribution due for each project eligible for financing in advance and in a single instalment equal to 100% of the contribution granted, normally within 60 days from the issuance of the decree of admission to financing and after all preliminary formalities have been completed.
2. The Ministry will first require beneficiaries to underwrite a specific bank or insurance guarantee to cover the entire amount of the financial contribution.
3. The guarantee is not required for those universities and *enti pubblici di ricerca* subject to the supervision of MUR, in respect of which the Ministry may act with financial compensation measures.



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Article 10

Obligations and Penalties for Host Organizations/ Beneficiaries

1. Organizations selected as host institutions by researchers applying for the role of *Principal Investigator* are required to provide applicants, before the proposal submission, with a declaration stating they commit to host them, and grant access to the facilities and infrastructures necessary for the operations of the working group the *Principal Investigator* intends to coordinate in view of the project execution.
2. Following the publication of the rankings, host institutions, in their role as beneficiaries, need to enter a special contract with *PIs* who are not already employed for an indefinite or fixed term.
3. The beneficiaries are also required, under penalty of forfeiture of the contribution:
 - a) to comply with all the conditions set out in the Call for proposals and with the decree of admission to financing;
 - b) to ensure that the measures implemented do not differ from those listed in the application submitted;
 - c) to provide all the documentation and information requested, within the time and in the manner prescribed by the Call for proposals and the provisions consequent thereto;
 - d) to ensure that the planned activities begin and end within the time limits set by the Call for proposals;
 - e) to ensure the timely and complete implementation of the activities, under the scientific responsibility of the PI, in accordance with the application submitted and accepted for the funding;
 - f) to keep, for at least five years from the date of submission of the final report, the accounting, technical and administrative documentation proving the expenditure incurred and the statements counted, as well as all documents relating to the expenditure process (from the acquisition of estimates up to the delivery of the assets purchased). The above documentation must be made available for inspection in case of control;
 - g) to ensure that the contributions provided for in the Procedure are not combined with other economic concessions obtained for the same expenses.



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Article 11

Final Reporting

Beneficiaries shall submit project reports following the procedures set out in Ministerial Decree no. 841 of 15 July 2021 and based on the “Linee guida per la rendicontazione e la determinazione delle spese ammissibili”.

Article 12

Revocation, Forfeiture and Penalties

1) The contribution awarded will be revoked and beneficiaries will incur in the full forfeiture of the grant if they do not comply with all the instructions and obligations contained in the Procedure and if any of the following conditions occur:

- a) the declarations made and signed in the contribution application are false.
- b) the implementation of the intervention is not in line with what is declared in the project accepted for funding;
- c) the beneficiary has obtained other contributions for the same expenses reported;
- d) the implementation of the planned activity is not executed within the time limits set for the conclusion of the projects, with the exception of possible extensions due to force majeure and approved by MUR;
- e) the beneficiary does not submit all the documentation required in the final report or does not submit it in the occurrence of a control operation.

2. In case of forfeiture or withdrawal, if the contribution has already been paid out, the beneficiary is required to return the sums received. In this regard, MUR reserves the right to execute offset payments to the recipient, or to enforce the guarantee, in the cases referred to in art. 9, paragraph 2.

3. If beneficiaries wish to withdraw from the contribution and/or the project, they must notify the MUR through the reporting platform. In such cases, MUR will proceed to revoke the funding, and



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claim back the sums paid out, enforce the guarantee, in the cases referred to in art. 9, paragraph 2, or provide financial offsets, in the cases referred to in art. 9, paragraph 3.

Article 13

Audits, Controls, and Ex-Post Evaluations

1. The MUR reserves the right to carry out checks to ascertain compliance with the obligations set out in the concession measure and the truthfulness of the declarations and information produced.
2. Without prejudice to civil and criminal liability, the detection by the MUR of breach of law will result in both the withdrawal of funding and in the automatic exclusion of the *PI* from subsequent MUR calls, for a period of five years from the date on which the breach of law was detected.
3. The CNVR (National Committee for the Evaluation of Research) may arrange for mid-term and ex-post evaluation activities of the projects, in accordance with the rules in force for the evaluation of the university system and of research.

Article 14

Conflicts of Interest

The *Principal Investigator* must ensure, by declaring it, that he/she is not in situations, even potential, of conflict of interest, under penalty of the withdrawal of the intervention and the return of the contribution received from the beneficiary.

Article 15

Person Responsible for the Administrative Proceedings of this Procedure

The person in charge of the proceedings is Dr Francesca Galli of the Directorate-General for Research at MUR.



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Article 16
Information

1. All the forms required for participation in this Call for proposals will be published on a dedicated platform (www.gea.mur.gov.it).
2. Requests for information and/or clarifications relating to the Procedure may only be submitted via the aforementioned platform. Requests received by other means will not be processed.
3. The requests referred to in paragraph 2 above will be treated in aggregate form; FAQs relating to the Procedure will be published in the dedicated section of the portal.
4. This procedure is sent to the Court of Audit for ex-ante control of legitimacy

The Director General

Dott. Vincenzo Di Felice

*"Digitally signed in accordance with the Digital
Administration statutory Code and related regulations".*