

# EPICUR Alliance Seed Funding Scheme

Call for proposals

2025



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## 1. Introduction

The following call for proposals for Seed funding projects has been launched for 2025 by the nine partners of the EPICUR Alliance.

The call for proposals includes the following documents:

- **Call document:** EPICUR Alliance Seed Funding Scheme Call for proposals 2025 (May 2025) which outlines the:
  - Background including objectives, scope, activities that can be funded & expected impact
  - Available budget
  - Timeline and deadlines and the application process
  - Eligibility criteria including who can apply, consortium composition, eligible activities, project duration
  - Evaluation and selection process
  - Award criteria
  - Implementation arrangements including funding and maximum grant amount, reporting requirements, payment arrangements
  - Contacts
- **Application form** (Template)
- **Budget form** (Template)
- **Letter of Intent** (Template)

For further information about the EPICUR Alliance you are invited to consult the Alliance website (<https://epicur.edu.eu/>) and in particular its vision, mission and strategy outlined in the 2022 mission statement (<https://epicur.edu.eu/about-epicur/strategy-vision/>).

## 2. Background

### 2.1 Objectives

The core ambition of the EPICUR alliance is to transform education, research and transfer practices and opportunities across its member universities in order to develop original cutting-edge solutions and train new generations of European change makers able to shape a European society in transition and help overcome the daunting challenges.

In the pursuit, through a stepwise approach, of deeper research collaboration and future joint teaching between EPICUR members, the EPICUR Seed Funding Scheme has been devised as an instrument to stimulate synergies between teaching and research by offering a financial support mechanism to support the building of promising research collaboration projects between EPICUR partner universities.

The set-up of a joint scheme is seen by the alliance partners as a strategic investment. It initiates a collaborative coordinated effort to stimulate research partnerships and ensure a more efficient allocation of resources than if each university were to independently create incentives for collaboration within EPICUR.

### 2.2 Scope

The Seed Funding call for proposals invites researchers affiliated to one of the EPICUR partner institutions, to submit proposals for one-year joint research project grants with colleagues from EPICUR universities.

The seed funding aims to facilitate the development of ideas for research cooperation, proofs of concept and foster collaborative joint research projects.

Proposals can focus on research in any scientific area, however, projects addressing the EPICUR strategy outlined in the Alliance mission statement are strongly encouraged.

### 2.3 Activities that can be funded

A joint research group may use the seed funding grant to cover costs for activities related to developing a future collaborative project and proposal writing, e.g., freeing time to make pilot studies or research, travel to initiate cooperation and meetings, proposal writing, use research equipment or other costs to prepare the project and build the research collaboration between the involved units.

An example of types of activities that can be funded within the call are indicated below:

- Scientific activities to prepare pilot studies or research, establish proof of concepts
- Activities to initiate a research cooperation (meetings, seminars, workshops, ...)
- Activities related to developing a future funding application including measures to free-up time from other duties
- Joint learning activities that will be offered in the framework of EPICUR (such as, courses, summer schools, seminars, workshops, master classes, pop-up courses, conferences ...). These activities can be developed as curricular or co-curricular offerings and each learning activity must be the equivalent of at least 6 hours of teaching.

For further clarifications, potential applicants should verify the eligibility of activities with local EPICUR contact points. (See also section 6 Eligibility)<sup>1</sup>

### 2.4 Expected impact

The Seed Funding scheme is designed to foster and develop closer collaborations among EPICUR's academics through increasing the number of collaborative research projects (Horizon or equivalent) and joint teaching offers between the EPICUR partner institutions.

Awarding of a Seed Funding grant is conditioned on the development of two specific outputs:

- The submission of an application for a project financed by a third party (Horizon Europe, Cofund, ...) up to 12 months after the end of the seed funding project.
- A joint learning activity that will be offered in the framework of EPICUR either during the lifetime of the seed funding project or up to 6 months after its end.

## **3. Available budget**

Applicants can **only be awarded funding from their own affiliated university**. Potential participants from those partner universities that are not offering seed funding in 2025 can also participate in projects but at their own cost.

The total budget per EPICUR partner earmarked for the funding of all projects under the 2025 call is indicated below. Potential applicants should contact their affiliated university institutional contact concerning the maximum budget available from their institution per project application.

Partner	AMU	AUTh	BOKU	KIT	SDU	UHA	UFR	UNISTRA	UvA
<b>2025 budget in EUR</b>	50.000	30.000	40.000	100.000 (TBC)	200.000	30.000 (TBC)	50.000	100.000	20.000

The EPICUR partners reserve the right not to award all available funds.

## 4. Timeline and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines	
Publication of the call	7 May 2025
Deadline for submission:	4 September 2025 – 23:59 CET
Evaluation:	Mid-September-October 2025
Information on evaluation results	December 2025
Expected project start date:	From December 2025

## 5. Application process and documents

Project proposals must be submitted via the SEED FUNDING file link based at the University of Strasbourg before the call deadline: <https://seafire.unistra.fr/u/d/60c6f8e182834c089986/>

The project applications should be submitted as follows:

**One folder** labelled “PROJECTname\_CoordinatingInstitution” containing your proposal, which must be complete and contain all four of the requested documents as follows:

1. Application form (Template) in one PDF file labelled as follows “PROJECTname\_Application\_Form\_2025”
2. Budget form (Template) “PROJECTname\_Budget\_Form\_2025”
3. Short CV of all applicants in the consortium in one PDF file “PROJECTname\_CV\_2025”
4. Letter of intent from all participating partners in one PDF file. (Template) PROJECTname\_Letter-of-intent\_2025”

Proposals including the application form and budget and supporting documents (CVs and letters of intent) must be submitted using the templates provided.

Project proposals and documents must be submitted in English.

Once an application has been submitted, the project coordinator will receive an e-mail confirmation of the reception of the application within 5 working days or 72 hours after the call deadline, whichever is the earliest. An application is successfully submitted only if a confirmation email is received. If you do not receive a confirmation, please send an email to [epicur\\_seedfunding@epicur.edu.eu](mailto:epicur_seedfunding@epicur.edu.eu) as soon as possible.

Applications received after the call deadline will not be accepted.

## 6. Eligibility

### 6.1 Who can apply

The call is open for researchers affiliated to any of the nine EPICUR partner universities:

Participating institutions:

- Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan (PL)
- Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (GR)

- BOKU University (AT)
- Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (DE)
- University of Amsterdam (NL)
- University of Freiburg (DE)
- University of Haute-Alsace (FR)
- University of Southern Denmark (DK)
- University of Strasbourg (FR)

## **6.2 Consortium composition**

Proposals must be submitted with a consortium of researchers from at least three partners from three different EPICUR countries. Proposals with four or more EPICUR partners will be favoured.

### **Coordinator / Main Applicant:**

Each seed-funding proposal must identify:

- One main coordinator for the project.
- One local coordinator in each participating partner institution.

The main coordinator is responsible for coordinating the project with the support of the local coordinators.

### **Special target groups:**

#### **Early Career Researchers**

Participation of R2- and R3-level Early Career Researchers in the proposal is strongly encouraged but not required.

#### **External Partners**

External partners (industry, start-ups, civil society, and governmental bodies) are permitted, but cannot be project lead or receive any EPICUR funding.

#### **External Higher Education Institutions (HEI)**

Higher Education Institutions (HEI) outside of the EPICUR Alliance are not permitted to participate in the initial seed funding proposal. However, external HEI are welcome to join the consortium at a later stage linked to a future application for external funding.

## **6.3 Duration**

Projects can run for a period of up to 12 months, starting from December 2025. An extension up to a maximum of 12 additional months is possible if a justified request is received at least three months before the initial project period closes and it is feasible financially on an institutional level.

## **6.4 Joint EPICUR learning activity**

The proposal must include the design and planning of a joint EPICUR learning activity of a minimum of 6 hours to be implemented during the seed funding phase (or in the six months following the end of the project). (See section 1.3) The learning activity description in the application form should include at least the following information:

- Name and type of learning activity;
- Whether it is planned as a curricular or extra-curricular activity;
- Target audience and expected reach (KPI);
- Planned implementation period;
- Mode of delivery;
- Expected Learning outcomes.

### 6.5 Proposal for external funding

The project group must submit a proposal for external funding no later than 12 months after completing the seed funding project.

If the project group during the seed funding phase finds it impossible to submit a proposal for external funding and/or continue the collaboration, they will need to prepare a letter explaining the reason and difficulties. The project coordinator will then forward this to the EPICUR Research Committee & Education Committee for discussion. Each university will then handle the potential restitution of their funds accordingly.

In addition, the project group must consult with local research support offices to coordinate activities and to help improve the possibility of a successful application for external funding.

### 6.6 Restrictions to research areas

Proposals can focus on research in any scientific area. However, there may be restrictions at KIT that will be confirmed in mid- to late May. For clarification on eligible research areas, KIT researchers should please contact their local EPICUR KIT contact point.

### 6.7 Eligible costs

The table below is indicative but not exhaustive for costs that potentially could be covered. As universities have different rules and legislations on what can be funded in this seed funding scheme, please contact your local EPICUR contact point to ask for specific information (see section 10).

<b>Staff costs</b>	<b>Staff contract costs</b>
	Teaching/research assistants
	Fellowships
<b>Travel</b>	Travel, accommodation and subsistence
<b>Research costs</b>	Purchase of scientific equipment
	Internal invoicing for access to research infrastructure
	Consumables and supplies
<b>Communication &amp; dissemination</b>	Seminar/ conference costs
	Publications
	Website
<b>Other costs</b>	Subcontracting
	Meeting organisation
	Software
	Other goods and services
	Office supply
<b>Indirect costs</b>	Indirect costs

Seed funding cannot be used to cover overhead costs / administrative costs. Office supplies may be eligible if they are directly linked to the collaborative research project.

### 6.7.1 Unit costs for travel, accommodation, and subsistence

Projects should define unit costs for travel, accommodation and subsistence based on existing tools:

[https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/procedures-guidelines-tenders/information-contractors-and-beneficiaries/calculate-unit-costs-eligible-travel-costs\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/procedures-guidelines-tenders/information-contractors-and-beneficiaries/calculate-unit-costs-eligible-travel-costs_en)

### 6.7.2 Additional co-funding

Additional existing co-funding (Local, Regional, National or EU) must be listed in the application.

## 7. Evaluation and selection process

All proposals will follow the following evaluation procedure after the closure of the call.

**Step 1) Eligibility check** on the admissibility of the application. A short grace period will be authorised to collect any potentially missing documentation. Proposals found eligible will be admissible for evaluation (Steps 2 to 3).

**Step 2) Scientific reviews:** each admissible project will be evaluated by at least 2 academic peers exterior to the project coming from different EPICUR partner universities. They will evaluate the scientific quality of the project following the award criteria outlined in section 8 below.

**Step 3) An evaluation committee** made up of one representative from each of the EPICUR partner institutions as well as at least one representative members of the EPICUR Research and Transfer Committee (RTCOM) & EPICUR Education Committee (ECOM) will assess all the scientifically evaluated applications. The evaluation committee will recommend a list of proposals to be funded based on their scientific evaluation score and the budget available at each institution.

**Step 4)** The proposed recommendations for a list of successful applicants made by the EPICUR evaluation committee will be **approved by the EPICUR Executive Board**.

**Step 5)** All proposals will be informed about the evaluation result (**Evaluation Result Letter**). Successful proposals will be invited to launch their projects and contact their local EPICUR contact point to initiate the first instalment of the Seed Funding grant.

## 8. Award criteria

The award criteria for the evaluation committee of this call are as follows:

		Maximum points	
<b>Academic quality of the project</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality of research</li> <li>Quality of educational activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>30</li> <li>10</li> </ul>	40 points
<b>Scope and level of project activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relevance to the EPICUR strategy outlined in the Alliance mission statement</li> <li>Number of EPICUR universities involved</li> <li>Interdisciplinarity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10</li> <li>10</li> <li>5</li> </ul>	30 points



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involvement of R2 and R3 researchers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5</li> </ul>	
<b>Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential for obtaining significant external funding</li> <li>• Sustainability / continuation / long-lasting effects of the project</li> <li>• Citizen Science initiatives included in project</li> <li>• Number of impacted students by the educational activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10</li> <li>• 5</li> <li>• 5</li> <li>• 10</li> </ul>	30 points

## 9. Implementation arrangements

### 9.1 Funding and maximum grant amount

Projects can request and be awarded up to a maximum of 150.000 EUROS.

The final funding amount for each project will be allocated based on

- the results of the scientific evaluation score;
- the total budget available at each partner institution.

Applicants are advised to liaise with their local EPICUR contact points on the maximum institutional budget available for one project and possible restrictions in terms of ineligibility of expenditure prior to submitting an application.

### 9.2 Reporting requirements

The Seed Funding project will be monitored by a mid-project progress report and meeting and a final project report.

#### **Mid-project progress meeting:**

A short progress report will be prepared 15 days after the end of the first 6-month period. This report will contain four main parts, and each project will be requested to give information on the project scientific progress as well as progress on the learning activities, information on the impact including on the planned future funding application, and information on any specific challenges or deviations including the need for a project extension.

The project representatives will be invited to present and discuss the project progress included in the report at a virtual 90-minute **mid-term evaluation meeting**. This meeting is expected to be organised during the 7<sup>th</sup> month after the official start date. The meeting will include representatives of the Seed Funding project, 2 representatives from the EPICUR governance (Research and Transfer Committee and Education Committee members), at least one scientific peer reviewer, and EPICUR support staff. The project will be provided will written feedback on the project progress and potential recommendations after the meeting.

#### **Final project report:**

Due no later than 13 months after the project starts, the main coordinator must submit a short final report (max 2 pages) and any scientific outputs to the EPICUR Seed Funding team, describing:

- The work carried out within the project (activities) and how the mid-term recommendations were taken into account;
- The work carried out on applying for external funding;
- Impact and potential new directions following the collaborative project;
- Status of the planned learning activity;

- Financial overview of how the funds have been used;
- Reports will be examined by the EPICUR Research committee and Education Committee with support of scientific experts.

### **9.3 Payment arrangements**

All payments will be made from each partner institution to their affiliated researchers. No payments can be made from one institution to another.

Applicants are advised to liaise with their local EPICUR contact points prior to submitting an application for the local payment conditions.

## **10. Help**

For general questions concerning the 2025 Seed Funding call, applicants should send an e-mail to “epicur\_seedfunding@epicur.edu.eu”.

For any questions concerning one of the EPICUR partners’ participation conditions in the 2024 Seed Funding call, the following local EPICUR contact points should be contacted:

AMU - [epicur@amu.edu.pl](mailto:epicur@amu.edu.pl)

AUTH - Nikos Theodosiou/ [niktheod@civil.auth.gr](mailto:niktheod@civil.auth.gr)

BOKU - Nicolas Fries / [nicolas.fries@boku.ac.at](mailto:nicolas.fries@boku.ac.at)

KIT – Michael Zacherle / Kirsten Rosa / [epicur@kit.edu](mailto:epicur@kit.edu)

SDU – Ida Thøstesen / [epicur@sdu.dk](mailto:epicur@sdu.dk)

UFR – Charlotte Langowski / [charlotte.langowski@zv.uni-freiburg.de](mailto:charlotte.langowski@zv.uni-freiburg.de)

UHA – [epicur@uha.fr](mailto:epicur@uha.fr)

Unistra – Pascale Nachez / [epicur@unistra.fr](mailto:epicur@unistra.fr)

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