

# EPICUR Alliance Seed Funding Scheme

Call for proposals

2026

|       |                                                            |    |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 1.    | Introduction .....                                         | 3  |
| 2.    | Background .....                                           | 3  |
| 2.1   | Objectives .....                                           | 3  |
| 2.2   | Scope .....                                                | 3  |
| 2.3   | Activities that can be funded .....                        | 4  |
| 2.4   | Expected impact .....                                      | 4  |
| 3.    | Available budget .....                                     | 4  |
| 4.    | Timeline and deadlines .....                               | 5  |
| 5.    | Application process and documents .....                    | 5  |
| 6.    | Eligibility.....                                           | 5  |
| 6.1   | Who can apply .....                                        | 5  |
| 6.2   | Consortium composition.....                                | 6  |
| 6.3   | Duration .....                                             | 6  |
| 6.4   | Joint EPICUR learning activity.....                        | 6  |
| 6.5   | Proposal for external funding .....                        | 7  |
| 6.6   | Restrictions to research areas .....                       | 7  |
| 6.7   | Eligible costs .....                                       | 7  |
| 6.7.1 | Unit costs for travel, accommodation, and subsistence..... | 8  |
| 6.7.2 | Additional co-funding.....                                 | 8  |
| 7.    | Evaluation and selection process .....                     | 8  |
| 8.    | Award criteria .....                                       | 9  |
| 9.    | Implementation arrangements .....                          | 9  |
| 9.1   | Funding and maximum grant amount.....                      | 9  |
| 9.2   | Reporting requirements.....                                | 9  |
| 9.3   | Payment arrangements .....                                 | 10 |
| 10.   | Help .....                                                 | 10 |

## 1. Introduction

The following call for proposals for Seed funding projects has been launched for 2026 by eight partners of the EPICUR Alliance.

The call for proposals includes the following documents:

- **Call document:** EPICUR Alliance Seed Funding Scheme Call for proposals 2026 (April 2026) 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, and at the same time stimulate the development of joint learning activities between the project partners.

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 research-based learning activities that will be offered in the framework of EPICUR (such as, courses, summer schools, Learning Pathways, 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.
- Activities focused towards involving external partners (industry, start-ups, civil society, and governmental bodies) including citizen science.

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

## 2.4 Expected outcomes

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 contractually affiliated university**. The total budget per EPICUR partner earmarked for the funding of all projects under the 2026 call is indicated below. Potential applicants should refer to the Frequently Asked Questions or contact their affiliated university institutional contact for the maximum budget available per partner institution per project application.

| Partner                   | AMU    | AUTh   | BOKU   | KIT     | SDU     | UHA    | UFR    | UNISTRA |
|---------------------------|--------|--------|--------|---------|---------|--------|--------|---------|
| <b>2026 budget in EUR</b> | 50.000 | 50.000 | 60.000 | 170.000 | 200.000 | 50.000 | 50.000 | 100.000 |

The EPICUR partners reserve the right not to award all available funds and propose a reduced project budget to the selected Seed Funding projects.

## 4. Timeline and deadlines

| Timetable and deadlines                  |                               |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Publication of the call</b>           | 29 April 2026                 |
| <b>Deadline for submission:</b>          | 15 September 2026 – 23:59 CET |
| <b>Evaluation:</b>                       | Mid-September-October 2026    |
| <b>Information on evaluation results</b> | December 2026                 |
| <b>Expected project start date:</b>      | From January 2027             |

## 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/23f673afad1943528a77/>

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\_2026”
2. *Budget form (template)* “PROJECTname\_Budget\_Form\_2026”
3. *Short CVs of all applicants* in the consortium (no template) in one PDF file “PROJECTname\_CV\_2026”
4. *Letter of intent* (countersigned by either the principal investigator’s direct supervisor or their structure supervisor), from all participating partners institutions in one PDF file (**template**) “PROJECTname\_Letter-of-intent\_2026”

Proposals including the application form and budget and supporting documents (CVs and letters of intent) must be submitted using the templates if 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 eight EPICUR partner universities indicated below:

Participating institutions:

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

- Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (DE)
- 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 and awarded the maximum number of points in the evaluation process.

### **Coordinator / main applicant:**

Each seed-funding proposal must identify:

- One lead Principal investigator (PI) for the project.
- One Co-lead Principal investigator
- One Principal investigator for each participating partner institution.

The lead PI is responsible for coordinating the project with the support of the co-lead and the partner PI's.

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

For the 2026 call, participation of external HEIs is strictly limited to the following institutions: the University of Amsterdam, the University of Pablo Olavide (Spain), the University Roma Tre (Italy), and the University of Basel (Switzerland). No other external HEIs are eligible to participate.

These institutions may take part in a seed funding proposal; however, they will not receive funding from EPICUR. They are not eligible to act as the main coordinator (lead PI or co-lead PI) and do not count toward the required number of EPICUR partners involved.

#### **External Partners**

External partners (industry, start-ups, civil society, and governmental bodies) are permitted to participate in projects, but they are not eligible to act as the main coordinator (lead PI or co-lead PI) and will not receive funding from EPICUR.

## **6.3 Duration**

Projects can run for a period of up to 12 months, starting from January 2027. 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 during the seed funding phase, the project group 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 & Transfer and Education committees 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.

### **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).

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

Office supplies may be eligible if they are directly linked to the collaborative research project. The evaluation committee reserves the right to reduce the proposed allocated budget for each project and partner.

#### **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 be evaluated following the procedure indicated below 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 RTCOM & 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. The evaluation committee ensures that the budget provided by the partners is used to a maximum extent within the framework of this guideline.

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> <li>• Involvement of R2 and R3 researchers</li> <li>• Balance of activities between the proposed project partners</li> </ul>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10</li> <li>• 5</li> <li>• 5</li> <li>• 5</li> <li>• 5</li> </ul> | 30 points |
| <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>• Synergies with external partners and 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 each 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 should be prepared around 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> or 8<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 (RTCOM and ECOM members), ideally one scientific peer reviewer, and EPICUR support staff. The project lead will be provided with 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 should 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;
- Any scientific outputs;
- Financial overview of how the funds have been used;
- Reports will be examined by the EPICUR RTCOM and ECOM 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 2026 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 - Nicholas Sheppard / [nicholas.sheppard@boku.ac.at](mailto:nicholas.sheppard@boku.ac.at)

KIT – Michael Zacherle / Birgitta Kappes / [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 – Ian Roszak / [iroszak@unistra.fr](mailto:iroszak@unistra.fr)

\*\*\*