

CELSA Research Fund

Concept

[CELSA](#) is an alliance of ten European universities.

The 'CELSA partners' are:

- [Budapest University of Technology and Economics](#) (BME), Budapest, Hungary
- [Charles University](#) (CUNI), Prague, Czech Republic
- [Czech Technical University in Prague](#) (CTU), Prague, Czech Republic
- [Eötvös Loránd University](#) (ELTE), Budapest, Hungary
- [KU Leuven](#), Leuven, Belgium
- [Semmelweis University](#) (Semmelweis), Budapest, Hungary
- [University of Ljubljana](#) (UL), Ljubljana, Slovenia
- [University of Tartu](#) (UT), Tartu, Estonia
- [Jagiellonian University](#), Kraków (UJ), Poland
- [University of Warsaw](#) (UW), Poland

The 'CELSA Research Fund' will fund collaborative research projects between researchers of at least two CELSA partners, of which one must be KU Leuven, with the purpose of leveraging their efforts towards future Horizon Europe applications (or to its successor or any other competitive European fund). An open call for proposals will be launched once a year for approvals during three years, 2020-2022.

Offer

The CELSA partners will all contribute in principle € 60,000 per call. KU Leuven will contribute with in total 1,5 million per call. Maximum 15 to 16 projects will be funded per annum, depending on the set-up and the available annual budget.

The CELSA Fund will fund joint research projects with a maximum of € 120,000 for a duration of 2 years, in case researchers from two CELSA Partners are involved (a KU Leuven researcher and a researcher from one other CELSA Partner). KU Leuven funds 3/4 of the total project's budget (€ 90,000), and the other CELSA Partner contributes 1/4 (€ 30,000); the funding goes to the own participating scientist.

In case researchers from more than two CELSA Partners are involved in a single joint project, the budget is increased with their share (e.g. a project with researchers from 3 CELSA Partners will have a maximum budget of € 150,000 for 2 years). In case more than one researcher from the same CELSA Partner is involved in a single joint project, the total project budget as mentioned is not increased.

What can be funded in a CELSA project?

- It is up to the consortium of researchers to decide what should be funded (subject to the evaluation).
- The internal rules of each involved CELSA Partner regarding funding research apply.
- The CELSA partners cannot appoint staff at another CELSA partner. However, travel & subsistence costs of the team members in the project can be covered by either side of the 'joint' budget.
- The CELSA partner who paid for project equipment remains the owner of that equipment. It is up to the individual CELSA partners to make arrangements to enable the use of the equipment or available infrastructure by all relevant team members.

Assistance in match-making for KU Leuven by EU-support offices:

Because the initiative also targets new collaborations, we organize help to find a matching scientist at another CELSA partner. The EU support officers will exchange expressions of interests seeking collaboration by their researchers, attempting to find interested counterparts. Through an exchange of information between the EU support offices regarding future calls for proposals (e.g. future work programmes of Horizon Europe), the EU support teams will also assist the applicants in finding potential future topics in European programs.

Conditions

Following conditions apply:

- Any scientific discipline qualifies for funding by the CELSA Research Fund.
- The applicant consortium has to consist of at least one KU Leuven researcher who meets the conditions to be a promoter or co-promoter of a project under [Internal Funds](#) and at least one researcher from at least one other CELSA partner. Eligibility of researchers of the CELSA partners must be verified within each CELSA partner, following the specific conditions.
- The project funding can be used freely by the researchers involved, as long as the activities concern research, strengthen the collaboration within the CELSA network, and can lead to a high quality application for any of the European competitive funds as mentioned. Preferably research staff will be appointed on the project's budget (for KU Leuven: 'Wetenschappelijk medewerker' barema 43 of 44 or 'bursaal') ('science worker', PhD student or postdoc).
- Within 3 years of the start of the project, the applicant consortium (including additional partners) has to jointly apply for a call for proposals for a European competitive funding program, such as a collaborative research project in Horizon Europe (including Marie S. Curie innovative training networks, FET Open, Societal Challenges, ...).

Applicants are aware of [legal aspects](#) regarding the CELSA collaboration (ownership of results, dissemination of results, access rights, authorship, ethics and research integrity and some specific arrangements). Questions about this can be addressed to [the EU support office](#).

Procedure

Time schedule for the 2022 call for proposals

- Publication call: July 2021
- Deadline for submission: November 25th, 2021.
- Evaluation of project proposals: December 2021 – May 2022.
- Announcement of the results: July 2022
- Start of the projects: October 1st, 2022.

The project proposal has to contain the following parts:

- **Cover page (max. 1p):** title, name, affiliation, and e-mail address of the researchers involved, an indication of who will be the leading scientist of the project (coordinator, either from KU Leuven or a partner university), a non-confidential and public-friendly abstract or summary (max. 2000 characters), and up to 5 key words. Please use [this template](#).
- **Attachment 1: the project description (max. 4p):** problem statement & objectives, envisaged progress beyond the state of the art, methodology, anticipated results, managerial aspects and timing.
- **Attachment 2: Resources (max. 1p):** clear indication of the budget applied for at each side (KU Leuven side and partner university side) and the proposed use of the project budget to acquire new resources, linked to the methodology. Please add a description of the available resources (incl. infrastructure and equipment).

- **Attachment 3: Added value of the collaboration (max. 1p):** description of the consortium of researchers focusing on the added value of the collaboration to the envisaged research activities.
- **Attachment 4: Potential towards a future EU funding application (max. 1p):** description of the potential towards a future joint application as well as the linkages to a call for proposals of a European research funding program, specifying the future call (e.g. Marie S. Curie network, Horizon Europe focus area or draft call topic, ERA-Net call, cPPP call, ...); description of the relevance of the collaboration for that call, program, or European research & innovation policy or focus area (this may include aspects of innovation and potential future impact of the research or collaboration, if relevant in the future European call); proposed timelines and planning towards the future European application (including perhaps specifying types of additional partners outside CELSA required for the collaborative projects); identification of possible third parties and societal and/or industrial stakeholders or possible partners in future EU applications.
- **Attachment 5: CV of the involved researchers (max. 1p per participating researcher):** short description of the expertise, 5 most important publications relevant to the proposal, indication of previous (most important) European or international collaborations.

Proposal submission

For all applications the online submission system of the KU Leuven Internal Funds must be used (link below). Consequently, the KU Leuven researcher in the consortium will have to submit the joint project proposal, which will be composed of the cover page and the 5 attachments. After submission all participating researchers will receive a pdf file of the entire application.

The evaluation panel

The evaluation and selection of CELSA Research Fund project applications will be performed by a dedicated interdisciplinary 'CELSA Research Fund Evaluation Committee' (or 'Evaluation Committee'), which will be composed of:

- 6 members of the KU Leuven Council for International Cooperation Projects ([RISP](#)) and the KU Leuven vice-rector for research policy.
- 1 distinguished scientist of each of the other CELSA partners, who has experience with international evaluations.
- The KU Leuven chairman of the RISP chairs this Evaluation Committee.
- The Evaluation Committee members as well as [the KU Leuven Internal Funds Unit](#) are strictly bound to confidentiality and cannot disclose any information regarding the evaluation of the project proposals to any third party. The Evaluation Committee formulates a final advice to the CELSA Board, and the respective CELSA Partner academic authorities, who will confirm and execute the decision.

The CELSA Board will select at least one project for each partner, if the threshold for financing was reached. Further granting is on the basis of competition, following the quality assessment of the Evaluation Panel and the financial possibilities from the different partners. When choices have to be made between projects of equal quality, applications with more partners will have an advantage.

For KU Leuven: the Executive Board and the Academic Council have to formally ratify the final advice of the Research Council (in this case the CELSA Research Fund Evaluation Committee) before Internal Funds can be assigned to individual researchers.

A project can only start if all necessary ethical approvals are present or announced through the CMT tool. For all projects also a data management plan (DMP) needs to be sent in during the first 3 months of the project.

Selection

The reviewing process

The eligible proposals will be assigned to 3 (up to preferably 4) relevant remote experts (expert scientists from the CELSA partners) (at least one expert from KU Leuven and at least one from another CELSA Partner). The experts remotely review the proposals assigned to them, based on below mentioned criteria.

The expert reviewers remotely submit a score as well as evaluation comments to each of the proposals assigned to them into the online evaluation system of KU Leuven. All evaluations will be reported back to the Evaluation Committee and will be used to base the final evaluation upon.

In a one off meeting the Evaluation Committee ranks all proposals and the first ranked proposals will be recommended for funding, within the total available call budget.

Selection criteria

Scientific quality (60% of the scoring):

- To what extent does the proposed research address important challenges?
- To what extent are the objectives ambitious and beyond the state of the art (e.g. novel concepts and approaches or development between or across disciplines)?
- To what extent is the outlined scientific approach feasible? To what extent is the proposed research methodology appropriate to achieve the goals of the project?
- To what extent are the proposed timescales and resources necessary and properly justified?

Added value of the collaboration (20% of the scoring):

- To what extent is the proposed partnership relevant to the proposed project objectives? To what extent do the involved researchers have complementary expertise?
- To what extent has the proposed partnership the potential to become sustainable?

Potential towards future acquisition of European competitive funding (20% of the scoring):

- Does the proposed activity greatly help move the research collaboration towards the initial steps of a process leading to a future European collaborative research project?
- Does the proposal indicate a suitable and credible process that is designed to result in a concrete application for a European competitive program?
- Where relevant for the indicated European competitive funding program call, are aspects like innovation and socio-economic impact sufficiently addressed?

Feedback

[The KU Leuven Internal Funds Unit](#) will communicate the results to all the applicants from all CELSA Partners, including the anonymous review comments.

A redress to the decision of the Evaluation Committee is only possible in case of procedural mistakes. A request for review should be submitted within 20 working days of the communication of the decision to contact@celsalliance.eu.

Reporting

No intermediate reporting is required. The European support offices of the CELSA partners involved will proactively contact the researchers, suggesting follow-up European collaborative research funding opportunities.

A single concise end report will be submitted by the participating researchers one year after the end of the project (within three years after the start of the project). This document (max. 3 pages) will contain e.g. publications, the progress made regarding other projects applications, and a short financial report

(who is financed, what exchange has taken place). To this report an abstract of the submitted application (or any other proof of the submission) and call identifier of the pan-European competitive funding program has to be added (or any other proof of the submission).

Reports have to be sent to the secretary of the Research Council KU Leuven.