

Large projects for excellent researchers

*This short English version of the call is prepared for information purpose only. Binding, full version of the call is in Slovak on [this website](#).

Call code:	09I03-03-V03
Objective and purpose of the call:	<p>The call will support top research teams led by excellent researchers from Slovakia and abroad, who will carry out their research at research or innovation institutions in Slovakia. The application shall be submitted by the institution (applicant) together with an excellent researcher (principal investigator). The institution must allow the excellent researcher the freedom to carry out his/her own research, its focus, to apply for funding from other sources as well as to select researchers to the team, while respecting the rules of recruitment of researchers.</p> <p>The aim of the call is to attract or retain and support individual excellent researchers and their teams in carrying out research at research institutions in Slovakia. The support will be directed towards building and developing its own research team built around a particular excellent researcher/principal investigator. The call is open to internationally recognised researchers, both from Slovakia and abroad, who will carry out their research in Slovakia.</p> <p>The aim of the support is to improve the quality of research and innovation in strategically defined themes, thus to improve the situation of human resources while increasing the international recognisability of research teams, making them more competitive when participating in European projects, improving equipment and stabilising human resources. Projects must comply with the smart specialisation domains defined in the Research and Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation of the Slovak Republic.</p>

Duration of the call	
Call launch:	29 June 2023
Deadline:	28 September 2023
Allocation	
<p>The call allocation shall be EUR 53 863 200, of which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • resource of the Recovery and Resilience Plan: EUR 44 886 000 • resource Recovery and Resilience Plan – VAT: EUR 8 977 200 	
Eligible applicants	
<p>Eligible applicants are only legal persons with assigned identification number pursuant to Act No. 272/2015 Coll. on the Register of Legal Entities, Entrepreneurs and Public Authorities and on Amendments and Supplements to Certain Acts.</p> <p>For the purpose of the call, eligible applicants are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> the state sector, which consists of the Slovak Academy of Sciences and legal entities carrying out research and development established by central state administration bodies, the sector of public research institutions, which consists of public research institutions, the higher education sector, consisting of public universities, state universities, private universities and their established legal entities carrying out R&D; the non-profit sector, consisting of non-profit organisations, civic associations and associations of legal entities carrying out research and development; and the business sector, consisting of entrepreneurs who also carry out R&D as part of their business activities (micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, so-called SMEs; large enterprises). <p>Entities referred to in point d) must have the performing of ‘research and development’ declared in their statutes or founding documents prior the date of the call launch.</p> <p>Entities referred to in point e) must have the subject of activity ‘research and development’ registered in the Commercial Register prior the date of the call launch.</p>	
Purpose of the call	
<p>The purpose of the call is to support large projects of fundamental and applied (industrial) research carried out by excellent researchers and their teams in strategically defined areas. Projects must be implemented at research and innovation institutions in Slovakia.</p> <p>The objective is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract or retain and support individual excellent researchers and their teams in the implementation of research in Slovakia. • Support the building and development of the research team of an excellent researcher (principal investigator). • Improve the equipment. • Increase competitiveness in engaging in the European projects. <p>Applications must be in line with the smart specialisation domains defined in the Research and Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as SK RIS3 2021+) as further described in the EDP Summary Report on SK RIS3 2021:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovative industry for the 21st century 	

- Mobility for the 21st century
- Digital transformation of the Slovakia
- Healthy society
- Healthy food and the environment

The application and its activities must be linked to at least one of the listed domains. The link and compliance with the identified domain/domains of SK RIS3 2021+ shall be described by the applicant in Annex 6 'Project description'.

In the application form, the applicant must identify an excellent researcher (principal investigator) at the career stage of R3 or R4, as demonstrated by his/her CV (part of Annex 6 'Project description'). The description of the project should be prepared using the Annex 6 'Project description'.

The applicant must allow the excellent investigator the freedom to carry out his/her own research, its focus, to apply for funding from other resources and to select researchers for the team. At the same time, the rules on recruitment of researchers must be respected¹.

The relationship between the excellent researcher/principal investigator and the beneficiary must be ensured by an employment contract in accordance with the Labour Code with the corresponding working time per project indicated in the application form. The recommended amount of working time of an excellent researcher/principal investigator for the implementation of the project is 100 % (full-time). The minimum working time of the researcher for the implementation of the project is 50 % of full-time. The amount of working time of the excellent researcher/principal investigator on the project shall be indicated by the applicant in Annex 1 'Project data and project budget/Údaje o projekte a rozpočet projektu'.

Projects must focus on research activities as well as the development/improvement of equipment.

Eligible project activities

Type of research for research organisations/research infrastructures (non-undertakings with a non-economic project):

1. Independent research – is of a non-economic nature and represents experimental or theoretical work carried out with the aim of broadening knowledge and better understanding of given topics, including research collaboration, where the research organisation or research infrastructure engages in effective collaboration. Activities of fundamental research, applied research and feasibility studies that reach the **maximum TRL 3** – experimental proof of concept, resulting in demonstration of the functionality of the concept and the potential of the concept to further develop are eligible. Experimental proof of concept also includes demonstration of the concept at laboratory level, while there is no development of prototypes and/or validation of the product/project/system/programme itself as a result of the intended concept. This type of research is relevant exclusively to entities that do not constitute an undertaking and will not carry out activities of an economic nature within the project.

Type of research for undertakings or economic projects of research organisations/research infrastructures:

1. Fundamental research – means experimental or theoretical work carried out to acquire new knowledge of the essential foundations of phenomena and observable facts without the intended direct commercial application or use. Only activities that reach the **maximum TRL 1** are eligible. They can result in a preliminary evaluation of the potential benefits of the concept against the existing ones.

2. Industrial research is a planned research or critical survey aimed at acquiring new knowledge and skills for the development of new products, processes or services. Activities that reach the **maximum TRL 3** – experimental proof of concept, resulting in demonstration of the functionality of the concept and the potential of the concept to further develop are eligible. Experimental proof of concept also includes demonstration of the concept at laboratory level, while there is no development of prototypes and/or validation of the product/project/system/programme itself as a result of the intended concept.

¹ [European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers](#)

Note:

The accuracy of the assignment of a type of research according to its nature will be subject to a peer review.

Duration of the project

The time eligibility of the project starts at the earliest on the date of application submission, i.e. the implementation of the project² may not start before the application submission.

The project's eligibility period ends, i.e. research activities must be completed and expenditure reimbursed no later than 30. 6. 2026.

Eligible costs**Eligible direct costs:**

a) **Salary/staff costs** - the total cost of the work of persons to the extent that they are directly involved in the project, i.e.:

- the salary costs of the members of the research team or technical staff directly involved in the implementation of the project and the project/financial managers responsible for project management and financial management;
- remuneration for work performed on the basis of agreements outside the employment relationship – for work tasks or work activities directly related to the implementation of the project.

The amount of eligible direct salary/staff costs is set in the form of **unit personnel costs at EUR 3 684 EUR/person for 100 % of the working time on the project** (total cost of the work) for the following eligible positions:

- key researcher;
 - researcher;
 - technical staff and other auxiliaries;
 - project/financial manager – expenditures for this position are eligible up to 5 % of total salary costs.
- b) Expenditures on **setting up and/or upgrading research infrastructure** (procurement of tangible and intangible fixed assets) where the research infrastructure will be used exclusively or almost exclusively for non-economic purposes, i.e. the annual capacity allocated to the accompanying economic activity shall not exceed 20 % of the total annual capacity of the infrastructure concerned (for non-undertakings only).
- c) Expenditures on construction work and construction modifications (only if they are necessary for the installation of the infrastructure acquired under the project) (for non-undertakings only).
- d) Depreciation of capital assets (tangible and intangible) within the scope and period of its use within the project. Depreciation of tangible assets is eligible up to the amount of tax depreciation at maximum, calculated on the basis of the straight-line depreciation method. (Depreciation of capital assets is not eligible in the case of existing assets for which any funds from public resources have been provided in the past) (for undertakings only).
- e) Expenditures on knowledge and patents purchased or licensed from outside sources on an arm's length basis.
- f) Expenditures on obtaining, approving and protecting patents and other intangible assets (for non-undertakings only).
- g) Consumables, other goods and services.
- h) Travel refunds.

Indirect costs - set at a flat rate up to 7% of eligible direct costs. Indirect costs are those that cannot be directly attributed to research activities, but arise in connection with the implementation of the project (e.g. running of the organization, i.e. personnel, accountant, rent, energy, water, sewage, publicity, communication, etc.).

² start of implementation of research and/or development tasks within the project

Full text of the call also contains list of ineligible costs that cannot be funded under the project.

Location of the project implementation

The entire territory of the Slovak Republic is eligible for this call.

A. Do No Significant Harm (DNSH)

To ensure compliance of the call with the DNSH Technical Guidance (2021/C58/01), the following activities and assets are excluded from support:

- i. activities and assets related to fossil fuels, including downstream use;
- ii. activities and assets under the EU Emission Trading System (ETS) achieving projected greenhouse gas emissions that are not lower than the relevant benchmarks;
- iii. activities and assets related to waste landfills, incinerators and mechanical biological treatment plants; and
- iv. activities and assets where the long-term disposal of waste may cause harm to the environment.

All activities and projects must be implemented in accordance with relevant EU and national environmental legislation.

B. Professional quality condition of the project

Applications that are compliant with all conditions of the call will be subject to **peer review**, the purpose of which is to verify and evaluate the professional quality of the project, its impact, and the quality of the proposed implementation.

Peer review will be realised by foreign external independent expert evaluators, each application evaluated by at least 3 evaluators. They assess the fulfilment of the following criteria, considering the following aspects:

Criteria for the assessment of applications	Maximum score per criterion
Excellence	5
<p>Excellence and experience of the principal investigator.</p> <p>Relevance of the project or its linkage and contribution to the objectives and areas targeted by the call.</p> <p>Scientific quality and experience of the principal investigator.</p> <p>Relevance of the problems/needs at which the project is aimed.</p> <p>The project goes beyond the currently available technical solutions, procedures, products, etc. <i>“beyond the state of the art”</i>.</p> <p>Compliance of the project with strategic documents at national and/or European level and linking the activities of the project to the European Research Area.</p> <p>Compliance of the project with smart specialisation domains in the Research and Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation of the Slovak Republic.</p> <p>Appropriateness, timeliness and relevance of the proposed methodology to the objectives of the project.</p> <p>Quality of use and management of research data and outputs within the project, integrating the principles of open science.</p>	
Impact	5
<p>The credibility of the proposed procedures, the likelihood that the project will achieve the expected results and will have the expected impact.</p> <p>The significance of the anticipated impact – on the given area of knowledge and the scientific community, on the economy, on society, on the environment.</p> <p>Adequacy of expected results and impacts of the project – qualitative and quantitative.</p> <p>The appropriateness and quality of the proposed measures to maximise the results and impact of the project.</p> <p>The quality of the proposed IPR management strategy for project results (if relevant).</p>	
Implementation	5

Quality and efficiency of the project plan, feasibility of planned activities.

The coherence and logic of the work packages and the adequacy of the allocated resources, the adequacy of the proposed milestones and outputs.

The capacity and tasks of the applicant; description how an applicant has the necessary expertise and material and technical equipment.

Estimation of implementation risks, quality of proposed measures.

Coordination and management of the project.

Quality of project management and processes.

Quality of ensuring gender equality and equal opportunities within the project.

The evaluator assigns a maximum of 5 points to each criterion, with a possible resolution to ½ points.

The condition will be met by those applications that get **score above the *threshold***:

- **for an individual criterion**, gain a minimum of 3 points from the majority of evaluators, i.e. from at least two of three evaluators;
- **for the overall score** – a gain of at least 10 points, the overall score is determined as the sum of the averages of each criterion (the average of each criterion is calculated from the evaluations where the criterion fulfilled the conditions (at least 3 points)).