



COURTESY TRANSLATION

COMPETITIVE PROCEDURE SUPPORTING FUNDAMENTAL RESEARCH ACTIVITIES FINANCED BY THE ITALIAN SCIENCE FUND 2022 - 2023 (FIS 2 - CALL)

THE DIRECTOR GENERAL

HAVING REGARD to Law no. 241 of 7 August 1990, on '*New rules on administrative procedures and the right of access to administrative documents*';

HAVING REGARD to Law no. 196 of 31 December 2009, '*Law on Accounting and Public Finance*', as amended;

HAVING REGARD to Law no. 240 of 30 December 2010, as amended, on "*Provisions on the organisation of universities, faculty staff and recruitment, and the assigned Government responsibility as to enhance the quality and efficiency of the university system*", as amended, in order to simplify the procedures for the evaluation of research projects and implement further measures provided for by the NRRP in the field of research, by Article 64 of Decree-Law no. 77 of 31 May 2021, concerning "*Governance of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan and initial measures to strengthen administrative structures and speed up and streamline procedures*, as amended by Law no. 108 of 29 July 2021 (*in General Series no. 26, of the Official Journal no. 181 of 30/07/2021*), with specific regard to:

- Article 20 (*Evaluation of research projects*): “1. *Free fundamental research projects of a strategic nature financed by the Fund for Investments in Scientific and Technological Research, referred to in Article 1, paragraph 870 of Law no. 296 of 27 December 2006, are subject to evaluation ((...)) according to criteria established by a non-regulatory ministerial decree ((...)). At least ten percent of the Fund is assigned in favour of young researchers under 40 years of age*’.
- Article 21 (*National Research Evaluation Committee*): 1. *In order to promote the quality of research and ensure a successful evaluation procedure, the National Research Evaluation Committee (CNVR) is hereby established. [...] 2. The CNVR, in particular:*
 - a) *Shall indicate the general criteria for the selection and evaluation of research projects, in compliance with the principles stated in the decree by the Minister of University and Research referred to in Article 20, taking into utmost consideration the recommendations approved by international organisations that Italy is part of;*
 - b) *Shall define the lists of members of the evaluation committees, if provided for by the decree of the Minister of University and Research referred to in Article 20, for their appointment by the Technical Facility for*



the Evaluation of Research Projects established at the Ministry of University and Research, pursuant to Article 21-bis;

- c) *If provided for in the respective calls for proposals, shall carry out, even partially, the selection procedures for research projects or programmes of other public or private entities, subject to agreement or convention with them;*
- d) *Shall define the criteria for identifying and updating the lists of technical-scientific and professional experts, for the assignment of technical-scientific evaluation task for research projects, as established by decree of the Minister of University and Research;*
- e) *Shall prepare specific reports on its activities and an annual report on research evaluation, to be send to the Minister, who ensures the publication and dissemination of the CNVR's reports.*

HAVING REGARD to Law no. 190 of 6 November 2012, '*Provisions for the prevention and repression of corruption and illegality in public administration*';

HAVING REGARD to Legislative Decree no. 33 of 14 March 2013, '*Reorganisation of the discipline concerning the obligations of publicity, transparency and dissemination of information by public administrations*';

HAVING REGARD to Decree-Law no. 1 of 9 January 2020, (Official Journal, General Series, no. 6 of 9 January 2020), '*Urgent provisions for the establishment of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of University and Research*', as amended by Law no. 12 of 5 March 2020;

HAVING REGARD to DPCM no. 164 of 30 September 2020 (Official Journal, General Series, no. 309 of 14 December 2020), containing the Organizational Rules of the Ministry of University and Research (hereinafter, also just 'MUR'), and DPCM no. 165 of 30 September 2020 (Official Journal, General Series, no. 309 of 14 December 2020), '*Organizational Rules of Offices Collaborating Directly with the Minister of University and Research*';

HAVING REGARD to Ministerial Decree of 19 February 2021 (Official Journal, General Series, no. 74 of 26 March 2021), on the identification and definition of the tasks of non-general management level offices of the MUR;

HAVING REGARD to Law no. 178 of 30 December 2020, '*State budget for the financial year 2021 and multi-year budget for the three-year period 2021-2023*' and, in particular, Article 1, paragraph 551, which states that '*...the Ministry of University and Research shall avail itself of technical-scientific and professional experts, identified individually or organised in committees or commissions, for technical-scientific, financial and administrative-accounting analysis tasks, and for consequent verification, monitoring and control activities. The charges resulting from the implementation of this paragraph, including those referred to in Article 5 of Decree-Law no. 212 of 25 September 2002, as amended by Law no. 268 of 22 November 2002, shall be covered, up to a maximum of 7 percent, by the resources allocated for financing programmes and research projects. The provisions of this paragraph shall also apply to the operating expenses and fees relating to selection and evaluation procedures for research projects of the National Committee of Research Supervisors, referred to in Article 21 of Law no. 240 of 30 December 2010. The following provisions are deleted or repealed: a) Article 5, paragraph 2, second sentence, of decree-law no. 212 of 25 September 2002, as amended by Law no. 268 of 22 November 2002; b) Article 32(3) of Decree-Law no. 5 of 9 February 2012, as amended by Law no. 35 of 4 April 2012; c) Article 21(3) of Law no. 240 of 30 December 2010*';



HAVING REGARD to Decree-Law no. 73 of 25 May 2021, on 'Urgent measures related to the COVID-19 emergency, for businesses, labour, youth, health and territorial services' (Official Journal, General Series no. 123 of 25 May 2021), as amended by Law no. 106 of 23 July 2021, (Official Journal, General Series, no. 176 of 24 July 2021 - Ordinary Supplement no. 25), which, in Article 61, establishes the Italian Science Fund providing that *"1. In order to promote the development of fundamental research, a special fund, named "Italian Science Fund", is established in the estimates of the Ministry of University and Research, with an initial endowment of 50 million euros for the year 2021 and 150 million euros as from the year 2022. By decree of the Minister of University and Research, to be adopted within ninety days from the date of entry into force of this law, the criteria and modalities for the allocation of the fund's resources through tender procedures inspired by parameters of the European Research Council (ERC) shall be established, with particular reference to the types called "Starting Grant" and "Advanced Grant". The charges resulting from the implementation of this Article, set at EUR 50 million for the year 2021 and EUR 150 million from the year 2022, shall be met in accordance with Article 77"* ;

HAVING REGARD to Law no. 234 of 30 December 2021, on 'State Budget for the Financial Year 2022 and Multiannual Budget for the Three-Year Period 2022-2024' (OJ, General Series No. 310 of 31-12-2021 - Ordinary. Supplement no. 49) which, in Article 1, paragraph 311, provided that *"The endowment of the Italian Fund for Science, referred to in Article 61 of Law Decree no. 73 of 25 May 2021, as amended by Law no. 106 of 23 July 2021, is increased by EUR 50 million for the year 2023 and by EUR 100 million as from the year 2024"*.

HAVING REGARD to Decree of the Ministry of Economy and Finance of 31 December 2021 on *"Breakdown into chapters of the parliamentary voting units relating to the State budget for the financial year 2022 and for the three-year period 2022-2024"* (OJ, General Series no. 310 of 31-12-2021 - Ordinary Supplement no. 50), and in particular Table 11 annexed thereto, concerning the estimates of the Ministry of University and Research;

HAVING REGARD to Law no. 197 of 29 December 2022, on *'State Budget for the Financial Year 2022 and Multiannual Budget for the Three-Year Period 2023-2025'*;

HAVING REGARD to Decree of the Ministry of Economy and Finance of 30 December 2022 on *"Breakdown into chapters of the parliamentary voting units relating to the State budget for the financial year 2023 and for the three-year period 2023-2025"* (OJ, General Series no. 304 of 30-12-2022 - Ordinary Supplement no. 44), and in particular Table 11;

HAVING REGARD to Directorial Decree prot. no. 2281 of 28 September 2021, 'Competitive procedure for the development of fundamental research activities, from the Italian Science Fund' (FIS Call 2021);

HAVING REGARD to Ministerial Decree no. 116 of 01 March 2023, concerning *'New procedural provisions for direct interventions to support fundamental research activities, financed by the Italian Science Fund, referred to in Article 61 of Decree-Law no. 73 of 25 May 2021, as amended by Law no. 106 of 23 July 2021'*, which, in regulating the procedures for use of the Italian Science Fund for the purpose of implementing measures aimed at supporting fundamental research, in the context of highly qualified research programmes, has also repealed Ministerial Decree no. 841 of 15 July 2021, the application of which is limited to notices already issued;

NOTING that the current availability in terms of accrual on Chapter 7720 *"Italian Science Fund"* is equal to:

- year 2022: € 150.000.000,00



- year 2023: € 188.000.000,00

CONSIDERED that it is necessary to adopt a call aimed at defining the characteristics of the *competitive procedure for the development of fundamental research activities, under the Italian Science Fund 2022 - 2023 (FIS 2 - CALL)* from the resources identified above;

CONSIDERED, therefore, that this call for proposals provides for the funding of fundamental research projects with resources allocated for both of the aforementioned years, and that it incorporates, in a single year of implementation, funding of two different procedures that, in accordance with the principles of simplification and rationalisation of administrative procedures, are included in a single call;

CONSIDERING therefore, in accordance with the principles of proportionality and good performance, the need to ensure favor participationis and the par condicio of all possible interested parties, with the consequent non-applicability of the limitation defined in Article 6, paragraph 7, of Ministerial Decree no. 116 of 1 March 2023, pursuant to which *'in the event that, in the context of a procedure under the Italian Science Fund, proposals have obtained a score deemed, on the basis of the specific provisions of the call, insufficient for admission to the second stage referred to in the following paragraphs, the researchers identified as PI shall be considered ineligible in the context of the subsequent call under the same Fund. Those PIs whose project proposals have not passed the first evaluation phase shall also be excluded, even within the framework of call procedures under the FIS fund still in progress'*;

WHEREAS, for this reason, the aforementioned provision is not applicable, and therefore project proposals may be submitted by all interested researchers, except for those already receiving funding under the FIS following the conclusion of the FIS 2021 procedure referred to in DD 2281 of 28 September 2021, *"Competitive procedure for the development of fundamental research activities under the Italian Science Fund"*;

AS TO THE ABOVE

DECREES

Article 1 Scope and Definitions

1. The Italian Science Fund (FIS) promotes the development of fundamental research, in accordance with established European procedures, through the competitive allocation of grants modelled on the *Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grant* schemes of the *European Research Council (ERC)*.
2. The Italian Science Fund (FIS) is used to finance research projects with a high scientific content, carried out by independent research teams under the scientific coordination of an Italian or foreign *Principal Investigator (PI)*, resident in Italy or coming from abroad, who meets the requirements set out in the following articles for the *Starting Grant, Consolidator Grant and Advanced Grant* funding schemes respectively.
3. The composition of the research team is flexible; depending on the nature of the project, the research team may consist of researchers from the host organisation only, or it may also involve researchers from other Italian or foreign organisations. In areas where research can be carried out individually, such as in the Humanities and Mathematics, the PI may work alone.



4. Consistent with the principles that inform the funding of fundamental research at international level, the use of FIS is guided by the following principles:
- high scientific qualification;
 - funding of projects in any field of research;
 - attractiveness of the funding, including for the *Host Organisation or Host Institution*, which will receive as an incentive 10% of the cost of the project if the PI is not already a structured employee (full professors, associate professors and researchers on a permanent and personal basis, and equivalent, as under Art. 10, para. 5);
 - scientific independence of the PI within the hosting organisation, which will offer a suitable research environment for carrying out the project independently;
 - eligibility of researchers as PIs on the basis of the requirements set out in the following articles distinctly for the *Starting Grant*, *Consolidator Grant* and *Advanced Grant* funding schemes.
5. For the purposes of this procedure (hereinafter the "Call"), the following definitions apply:
- "CNVR": the National Research Evaluation Committee, as defined by Art. 64 of Decree-Law no. 77 of 31 May 2021, as amended by Law no. 108 of 29 July 2021.
 - "Evaluation Committees or Boards": the evaluation committees (Boards) identified for each of the 28 ERC sub-sectors.
 - "ERC": European Research Council.
 - "Technical-scientific expert" or "ETS": the independent experts or external auditors appointed by the MUR, identified by the CNVR or the Evaluation Committees for the evaluation of projects, pursuant to Art. 64 of Decree-Law no. 77 of 31 May 2021, as amended by Law no. 108 of 29 July 2021.
 - "FIS": the Italian Science Fund, referred to in Article 61 of Decree-Law no. 73 of 25 May 2021, as amended by Law no. 106 of 23 July 2021.
 - "ERC Macro-sectors" – LS (*Life sciences*), PE (*Physical Sciences and Engineering*) and SH (*Social Sciences and Humanities*) and their sectors and sub-sectors: the ERC panel structure at the deadline for submission of the project proposals (*Annex 1*).
 - "MUR" or "Ministry": the Ministry of University and Research.
 - "Host Organisation" or "Host Institution": Italian organisations based in the State territory, chosen by the *Principal Investigator* as the primary location of the activity related to the research project, and belonging to one of the following categories:
 - Italian state and non-state universities and university institutions, including Istituti universitari a ordinamento speciale (i.e. university-level institutions with special regulations);
 - public research bodies as per Legislative Decree no. 218 of 25 November 2016.
 - IRCSS –*Istituti di Ricovero e Cura a Carattere Scientifico*, i.e. public and private research-led hospitals and treatment centres, listed on the institutional website of the Ministry of Health on the date of this call (*Annex 2*);



- e) legal entities with research aims which meet the minimum requirements set out in this call, are located and have a permanent establishment in Italy, receive a recurrent financial contribution from the State (i.e. are among the public administrations, included in the consolidated State budget, identified according to Article 1, paragraph 3 of Law no. 196 of 31 December 2009, et seq.), and are included in the most recent list published by ISTAT at the time the present call is issued (*Annex 3*).
- f) "*Staff*": the human resources of the academic institutions (researchers, postdoctoral fellows, doctoral students and other professional figures identified in Article 18(5) of Law No. 240 of 30 December 2010, and subsequent amendments), researchers, technologists and grant holders of the public research institutions (EPR – Enti pubblici di ricerca) which receive a recurrent financial contribution from the State (i.e. are among the public administrations, included in the consolidated State budget, identified according to Article 1, paragraph 3 of Law no. 196 of 31 December 2009, et seq.), as well as personnel belonging to the medical and health profiles of IRCCSs, in fixed-term service or contracted *ad hoc*, engaged in the projects financed by this Procedure.
- g) "*Reporting of expenses*": the procedures undertaken to prove the correct financial execution of the project.
- h) "*Fundamental research*": experimental or theoretical work carried out primarily to acquire new knowledge about the foundations of phenomena and observable facts, without direct commercial applications or utilisation.
- i) "*Principal Investigator*" (hereinafter PI): the researcher, irrespective of his or her legal status and nationality, who is responsible for coordinating the research activities conducted within the framework of the project and the relevant *team*.
- j) "*REPRISE*": the register of scientific experts managed by the MUR.
- k) "*Beneficiary subject*": all the subjects indicated as eligible under letter (h) above, in whose premises the project will be carried out and which will be the recipients of the funding.
- l) "*Proposer*": the *Principal Investigator* (PI) who submits the project proposal.
- m) "*CINECA*": the Inter-University Consortium which manages the IT systems for the submission and scientific evaluation of research projects.
- n) "*Academic age*" or "*EA*": academic age is calculated from the date of the first scientific publication relevant to the prevailing field indicated in the project proposal.

Article 2

Proposing Parties (Principal Investigator) and Beneficiaries

1. The subjects eligible to submit the project proposal (proposing parties) are *Principal Investigators* of any nationality, who have chosen as *Host Institution* one of the Italian Institutions included in the categories specified in Article 1, paragraph 5, letter h) above.
2. The subjects eligible as beneficiaries of the grant under this Procedure are *Host Institutions*, as per Art. 1(5)(h) of this call.



3. *Principal Investigators* who are not already fixed- or indefinite-term employees of the Host Institution shall enter into an appropriate contract with the Host Institution after the publication of the results of the call.
4. *Principal Investigators* must meet the requirements set out for one of the following three funding schemes:
 - a) **Starting Grant:** fundamental research projects conducted by emerging researchers;
 - b) **Consolidator Grant:** fundamental research projects conducted by career researchers who want to consolidate their research autonomy;
 - c) **Advanced Grant:** fundamental research projects conducted by established researchers.
5. Project proposals may relate to all research areas pertaining to the macro-sectors and scientific-disciplinary fields determined by ERC, as listed in *Annex 1*, which forms and integral part of this call
6. Each PI may submit only one project proposal in this call, and may not be included in any other research group also submitting a proposal under this call.
7. No PI funded under the FIS 2021 procedure as per DD 2281 of 28 September 2021, "*Competitive procedure for the development of fundamental research activities under the Italian Science Fund*" may submit a project proposal in response to this call. Likewise, no PI holder of a project funded under this call may submit a new proposal in the next call for FIS resources.
8. For the reasons stated in the preliminary section of this document, PIs whose project proposals did not progress to the second evaluation stage in the FIS call issued by D.D. 2281 of 28 September 2021, are also allowed to submit a project proposal in the present call.

Article 3

The Principal Investigator in the Starting Grant scheme

1. The Starting Grant scheme covers projects coordinated by early-stage researchers (*Junior PI*).
2. The *Junior PI* must have obtained the first PhD or other equivalent qualification, or, for the LS macro-sector, the medical specialisation, at least 2 (two) and no more than 7 (seven) years before the application deadline for the present call. If the PI holds more than one doctoral degree or other equivalent qualification, the first qualification obtained is taken into account for the purposes of determining their experience.
3. Doctoral degrees obtained in a foreign country following advanced university-level studies and research may be recognised as equivalent to an Italian doctorate according to the procedure set out in Art. 74 of Presidential Decree no. 382/1980.
4. The eligibility period specified above may be extended beyond 7 years in the event of adequately documented career breaks, occurring before the deadline for submitting applications and resulting from:
 - i. *maternity leave:* the time limit for obtaining the first PhD is increased by 18 months for each child born before or after obtaining the PhD; if the applicant is able to document a longer total maternity leave, the period of eligibility will be extended by a period equal to the documented leave, or the actual leaves taken before the application submission deadline.



Maternity status must be documented by submitting the birth certificate of the child or children;

- ii. *paternity leave*: the time limit for obtaining the first PhD is increased by the actual amount of paternity leave taken before the application submission deadline for each child born before or after obtaining the PhD;
 - iii. *long-term illness* of more than 90 days, or national service: the time limit for obtaining the first PhD is increased, for each eligible event occurring after obtaining the PhD, by the actual amount of the leave from which the PI has benefited prior to the submission deadline for submitting the applications;
 - iv. *clinical training*: the time limit for obtaining the first eligible qualification is increased by the period of clinical training received after the date on which the first eligible qualification was obtained and before the application submission deadline, up to a maximum of 4 years;
 - v. *request for asylum*: the time limit for obtaining the first PhD is increased by the documented period of time during which the *Principal Investigator* was prevented from working, prior to the application submission deadline, due to the request for asylum, which occurred after the date of obtaining the PhD.
5. The time elapsed since obtaining the first doctorate –or specialisation in the medical area– cannot in any case exceed a total of 10 years after taking into account all the possible reasons for extension listed in the preceding paragraph.
6. For the purpose of determining the period since obtaining the relevant title, '*date of doctorate graduation (or medical specialisation)*' means the date of discussion of the relevant dissertation.
7. *Junior PIs* must prove that they have the potential to achieve full independence in research activities and give evidence of their scientific maturity, by showing that they have produced at least one major publication as lead author or without the participation of their PhD tutor.
8. *Junior PIs* must be able to show a promising *track record* by highlighting in the proposal:
- i. the publications, as lead author, in leading international and *peer-reviewed* scientific journals, including interdisciplinary publications. Scientific publications include peer-reviewed articles in scientific journals, books, chapters in books and editorships, as well as peer-reviewed monographs. The PI is required to submit an appropriate statement attesting to his or her role as principal author and highlighting the criteria used for establishing the role.
 - ii. publications, relevant to the research field of the project proposal, in leading international peer-reviewed scientific journals as co-author, or of contributions to peer-reviewed collections or monographs. Monographs are defined as written works that go into depth and attempt to be comprehensive on a given topic; by way of example, but not limited to, monographs do not include reviews of individual works, short catalogue entries without independent scientific content, or abstracts;
 - iii. invited presentations at prestigious conferences, including international ones, and at university-level institutions of high international standing;



- iv. patents;
 - v. awards related to scientific activity and international recognitions;
 - vi. experiences abroad and international collaborations.
9. Under penalty of full revocation of the funding received, the *Junior PI* must guarantee a time commitment of no less than 50% in terms of the person-months dedicated to the project.

Article 4

The Principal Investigator in the Consolidator Grant scheme

1. The *Consolidator Grant* scheme covers projects coordinated by career researchers (*Consolidator PI*).
2. The *Consolidator PI* must have obtained the first PhD or other equivalent qualification, or, in the LS macro-sector, the medical specialisation, at least 7 (two) and no more than 12 (twelve) years before the date of the application submission deadline.
3. If the *Consolidator PI* holds more than one doctoral degree or other equivalent titles, the first valid qualification obtained is taken into account for the purposes of determining their experience.
4. Doctoral degrees obtained in a foreign country following advanced university-level studies and research may be recognised as equivalent to an Italian doctorate according to the procedure set out in Art. 74 of Presidential Decree no. 382/1980.
5. The eligibility period specified above may be extended beyond 12 years in the event of adequately documented career breaks, occurring before the deadline for submitting applications and resulting from:
 - i. *maternity leave*: the time limit for obtaining the first PhD is increased by 18 months for each child born before or after obtaining the PhD; if the applicant is able to document a longer total maternity leave, the period of eligibility will be extended by a period equal to the documented leave, or the actual leaves taken before the application submission deadline. Maternity status must be documented by submitting the birth certificate of the child or children;
 - ii. *paternity leave*: the time limit for obtaining the first PhD is increased by the actual amount of paternity leave taken before the application submission deadline for each child born before or after obtaining the PhD;
 - iii. *long-term illness* of more than 90 days, or national service: the time limit for obtaining the first PhD is increased, for each eligible event occurring after obtaining the PhD, by the actual amount of the leave from which the PI has benefited prior to the submission deadline for submitting the applications;
 - iv. *clinical training*: the time limit for obtaining the first eligible qualification is increased by the period of clinical training received after the date on which the first eligible qualification was obtained and before the application submission deadline, up to a maximum of 4 years;
 - v. *request for asylum*: the time limit for obtaining the first PhD is increased by the documented period of time during which the *Principal Investigator* was prevented from working, prior to



the application submission deadline, due to the request for asylum, which occurred after the date of obtaining the PhD.

6. The time elapsed since obtaining the first doctorate –or specialisation in the medical area– cannot in any case exceed a total of 15 years after taking into account all the possible reasons for extension listed in the preceding paragraph.
7. For the purpose of determining the period since obtaining the relevant title, '*date of doctorate graduation (or medical specialisation)*' means the date of discussion of the relevant dissertation.
8. *Consolidator PIs* must prove that they have the potential to achieve full independence in research activities and must give evidence of their scientific maturity, by showing that they have produced at least two major publications as lead author or without the participation of the PhD tutor.
9. *Consolidator PIs* must be able to show a promising *track record*, by highlighting in the proposal:
 - i. the publication as lead author in leading international *peer-reviewed* scientific journals, including interdisciplinary publications;
 - ii. publications in leading international *peer-reviewed* scientific journals as co-author, contributions to *peer-reviewed* collections or monographs relevant to the research field of the project proposal;
 - iii. invited presentations at prestigious conferences, including international ones, and at university-level institutions of high international standing; patents;
 - iv. awards related to scientific activity and international recognitions;
 - v. experiences abroad and international collaborations.
10. Under penalty of full revocation of the funding received, the *Consolidator PI* must guarantee a time commitment of no less than 40% in terms of the person-months dedicated to the project.

Article 5

The Principal Investigator in the Advanced Grant scheme

1. *The Advanced Grant* scheme covers projects, including high-risk ones, with the potential to open up new perspectives, including interdisciplinary ones, coordinated by established researchers in their field (*Senior PIs*), of any age and nationality.
2. The *Senior PI*, in addition to being scientifically independent, must have been active in research for a period of more than 12 (twelve) years, and have a profile that identifies them as a leader in the field of research in which the project proposal is located.
3. The *Senior PI* must provide evidence of having achieved results appropriate to the relevant field, and meeting at least one of the following requirements:
 - a) 10 publications as lead author (or as co-author, for scientific fields where alphabetical order of authors is considered the norm) in leading international *peer-reviewed* scientific journals, including interdisciplinary ones;
 - b) 3 important research monographs, concerning research fields in which the publication of monographs is considered the norm;



4. For the purposes of paragraph 3, the following may be considered, singularly or in combination, for evaluation purposes:
 - a) 5 patents;
 - b) 10 invitations to prestigious conferences, including international ones, and at university-level institutions of high international standing;
 - c) 3 research projects, whether national or international, conducted under the guidance and responsibility of the *Senior PI*, either as project coordinator or unit manager;
 - d) 3 prestigious international conferences or congresses where the *Senior PI* has been involved as a member of the steering or organizing committee;
 - e) international recognition such as scientific or artistic awards, admission to renowned academies, or commissions for works (e.g. architectural or engineering design);
 - f) recognised *leadership* in industrial innovation.
5. *Senior PI* results obtained over a longer period than the last 10 years may be taken into account in the following circumstances, which must be highlighted in their resume:
 - i. for maternity leave, the *track record* taken into account may be extended by 18 months, or the period of leave actually taken before the application submission deadline, whichever is longer, for each child born before or during the last 10 years;
 - ii. for paternity leaves, the *track record* taken into account may be extended for the period of leave actually taken before the application submission deadline, for each child born before or during the last 10 years;
 - iii. in case of long-term illness (more than 90 days for the *PI Senior* or a close family member-child, spouse, parent or sibling), clinical condition or national service, the *track record* taken into account may be extended by the amount of leave actually taken before the application submission deadline, for each episode occurred in the last ten years;
 - iv. in the case of an asylum request, the track record taken into account may be extended for the documented time of the *Senior PI's* inability to work in the last ten years (the possible extension period runs from the date of the start of the asylum/refugee request to the date of the decision on the *refugee status* of the applicant *Senior PI* and/or the receipt of a specific residence permit).
6. Under penalty of full revocation of the funding received, the *Senior PI* must guarantee a time commitment of no less than 30% in terms of the person-months dedicated to the project.

Article 6

Host Institution

1. The *Host Institution* at which the PI undertakes to carry out the research project must be one of the organisations listed in Article 1(5)(h) of this Decree.
2. The *Host Institution* is the sole legal entity of reference for the Ministry.
3. Members of the research team, if they add scientific value to the project, may belong to legal entities, including private entities or research centres and/or industrial research laboratories, other than



the *Host Institution*, and may also be based outside Italy or the European Union. The expenses incurred by these external entities on the basis of a research contract can be reimbursed through the *Host Institution*, provided they do not exceed 40% of the expenses allowed for the execution of the project.

4. The research project must be carried out mainly in Italy, although this does not exclude the possibility that some activities (e.g. field research) may take place abroad, if this is necessary to achieve the scientific objectives of the project.

5. The *Host Institution* must respect the independence of the PI and must not in any way bind the PI's research to the strategy of the *Host Institution* itself, ensuring that the PI:

- a) proposes financing of the project in total independence;
- b) manages research and funding and makes appropriate resource allocation decisions;
- c) publishes independently as an author, and ensures the inclusion as co-authors of those who have contributed substantially to the project;
- d) coordinates the work of the members of the research team, also in the case of students or doctoral students;
- e) has access to adequate facilities and space to carry out research activities.

6. The *Host Institution* must also, at the request of the PI, for the purpose of submitting the project proposal, undertake to:

- a) host the PI by guaranteeing access to the premises and the necessary infrastructure to the team work coordinated by the PI in order to implement the project;
- b) stipulate an appropriate contract with the PI in the event of funding eligibility, if they are not already employees of the same Host Institution on a fixed-term or permanent basis as researchers or professors.

Article 7

Scientific scope of project proposals

1. Research projects may address topics in any of the three research macro fields as determined by the ERC (*SH: Social Sciences and Humanities; PE: Mathematics, physical sciences, information and communication, engineering, universe and earth sciences; LS: Life Sciences*).

2. Favourable consideration will be given to submissions related to:

- a. projects of an interdisciplinary nature that cross the boundaries between different research fields;
- b. pioneering projects, tackling new and emerging fields of research;
- c. projects introducing unconventional innovative approaches and/or scientific inventions.

3. When submitting the project proposal, the PI indicates, under their own responsibility, the prevailing ERC macro-sector and sector, identified on the basis of the ERC classification in force on the date of this call.

4. In the case of projects of an interdisciplinary nature, the PI indicates the relevant ERC fields by specifying the prevailing one first.



Art. 8

Budget and conditionality

1. The total budget of the call is € 338.000.000,00, including the costs for the technical-scientific, financial and administrative-accounting analysis activities and for the consequent verification, monitoring and control activities as per Art. 1, par. 551, of Law no. 178 of 30 December 2020, amounting to € 10.140.000,00.
2. The budget allocated for financing research projects, amounting to € 327.860.000,00, is apportioned as follows:
 - I. € 163.930.000,00 is allocated to fund the “*Starting Grant*” scheme,
 - II. € 81.965.000,00 is allocated to fund the “*Consolidator Grant*” scheme,
 - III. € 81.965.000,00 is allocated to fund the “*Advanced Grant*” scheme.
3. Each of the allocations referred to in paragraph 2 of this Article shall be distributed among the fields belonging to the three ERC Macro-sectors in proportion to the overall amount of the funds applied for in each Macro-sector.
4. With a separate decree, MUR shall announce the allocation of the total funds available for each Macro-sector, and within it for each sector, defined according to the calculation procedures set out in the previous paragraph.
5. In any case, the MUR reserves the right to allocate any savings made available from the proportions referred to in paragraph 4 for the funding of project proposals useful to ensure full use of the funding.
6. If, within each funding scheme, the budget reserved for one or more ERC sectors, on the basis of the decree for the allocation of the total funds available for each sector, is higher than the request that can be funded, a subsequent directorial decree published at the end of the assessment procedure shall automatically redistribute the surplus within the same macro-sector in proportion to the economic requests of the projects successfully ranked.
7. If, following the redistribution referred to in the previous paragraph, the budget allocated to each funding scheme is greater than the eligible request for funding, an *ad hoc* directorial decree will automatically redistribute the excess budget in favour of the financing scheme which immediately precedes or follows the scheme in question (*starting/advance/consolidator; consolidator/advance/starting; advance/starting/consolidator*).
8. For the redistribution referred to in Section 7, within the macro-sectors and, therefore, the sectors, the procedure is the same as in Section 3 above, i.e. the available resources are allocated in proportion to the eligible applications.
9. However, the MUR reserves the right to use any expenditure savings to increase the funding of subsequent Procedures under the Italian Science Fund, by means of a specific provision.

Art. 9

Financial dimension, duration and deadlines of projects

1. The funding that may be granted for each project will not be less than:



- 1.2 million for the “*Starting Grant*” scheme;
 - 1.5 million for the “*Consolidator Grant*” scheme;
 - 2.0 million for the “*Advanced Grant*” scheme;
2. The funding that may be granted for each project will not be higher than:
- 1.5 million for the “*Starting Grant*” scheme;
 - 2.0 million for the “*Consolidator Grant*” scheme;
 - 2.5 million for the “*Advanced Grant*” scheme.
3. In the case of project proposals pertaining to *PE: Mathematics, physical sciences, information and communication, engineering, universe and earth sciences* and *LS: Life Sciences* macro-sectors, additional capital contribution may be requested in order to fund (or co-fund) the purchase of equipment to be used at the *Host Institution*; this contribution may not exceed a maximum of €500.000,00 (fivehundredthousand euros).
4. The maximum duration of the projects is 3 year, starting from the activity start date.
5. The official start date for projects is set on the 90th day following the issuance of the funding eligibility decree.
6. Funding is awarded to the Host Institution, which must guarantee adequate conditions for the PI to independently direct the research and manage its own funding for the duration of the project, with an appropriate deed of commitment signed by the legal representative or person delegated (*Annex 4*), devoting a minimum time commitment to the project activities as defined in the preceding articles.

Article 10 ***Eligible costs***

1. The capital contribution may be granted up to a maximum of 100 percent of the total eligible costs.
2. Eligible project costs must be actually incurred by the beneficiary for the implementation of the eligible project, in accordance with the eligibility criteria listed in Art. 7 of M.D. 116 of 1 March 2023, and in the ‘*Guidelines for Reporting and Determining Eligible Expenses*’ that will be made available on the institutional website and on the CINECA platform dedicated to this call.
3. It is the *Principal Investigator's* responsibility, at the time of submitting the application, to indicate the amount of the ministerial contribution requested within the limit of the grantable funding indicated in Article 9 above.
4. Costs are eligible if incurred from the official project start date (90th day after issuance of the funding eligibility decree).
5. The following cost items are eligible:
- a. *Principal Investigator*, if hired by the *Host Institution* for the duration of the project with the salary of a fixed-term researcher for *Starting Grant* winners, of an associate professor for *Consolidator Grant* winners, or with the salary of a full or associate professor for *Advanced Grant* project winners. The cost of temporary and permanent staff already employed by the *Host Institution* is not eligible.



- b. personnel: costs related to the person/months dedicated to the research project, exclusively for personnel contracted *ad hoc* for the project by:
- 1) university institutions (professors, researchers, research fellows, contract workers under Art. 22 of Law no. 240 of 30 December 2010, fixed-term technologists, doctoral students and other professionals identified in Article 18(5) of Law 240 of 30 December 2010, as amended);
 - 2) public research organisations (researchers, technologists and research fellows);
 - 3) legal entities with research aims to which the State contributes on an ordinary basis, eligible under Art. 4(4)(c) of Ministerial Decree no. 841 of 15 July 2021 (researchers, technologists and research fellows);
 - 4) IRCCSs (research staff in the medical and health sector analogous to university institutions).
- c. purchase of tools and equipment, funded on a capital account;
- d. other operating costs, such as, 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 incurred expressly for the project and strictly related to it;
- e. scientific consultancy or technical/scientific assistance services used exclusively for the purposes of the project;
- f. overheads.
6. The "*Guidelines for Reporting Expenses*" and the relevant forms, which will be made available on the institutional website and on the CINECA platform dedicated to the procedure, contain the terms and procedures for reporting the expenses incurred.
7. The "*Guidelines for Reporting Expenses*" may be updated and supplemented in light of any regulatory changes and updates in the context of the implementation of the initiatives to which they refer, or in any other case in which such updates and additions are necessary to ensure the proper administrative and accounting management of the projects admitted to funding, also with a view to simplifying and timely reporting.
8. For all matters not expressly addressed in the "*Guidelines for Reporting Expenses*", reference shall be made to the applicable national and Community provisions, to the specifications annexed to the decrees of eligibility for funding, and to this *Decree* qua "special law" (*lex specialis*) governing the procedures for the selection, implementation and reporting of the funded projects.
9. Any additional guidelines or technical instructions to be followed by the beneficiaries may be issued by the MUR also after the publication of this decree and the "*Guidelines for Reporting of Expenses*".

Article 11



Application submission deadlines and methods, and documents to be transmitted

1. The application for participation must be submitted by the *Principal Investigator* - the proposing party - under penalty of exclusion, in English and exclusively through the web-based procedure managed by CINECA and accessible at the link <https://fis-submission.mur.gov.it>, according to the terms and methods there indicated, starting at 12:00 (noon) on **10 October 2023** and until 12:00 (noon) on **9 November 2023**,
2. The documents and forms necessary to apply to this call will be made available at the same address (<https://fis-submission.mur.gov.it>), as well as on the institutional platform.
3. Once the application is closed and forwarded to MUR, the *Principal Investigator* will no longer be able to access the proposal submission section again in editing mode.
4. MUR accepts no liability if proposals are not submitted, or are submitted incompletely by the deadline, including for non-receipt or delayed receipt of communications due to incorrect or incomplete indication of the e-mail address by the applicant, for any computer errors, even if attributable to third parties, fortuitous events or force majeure.
5. The proposal must contain:

❖ Part A - Framework of the project and references of the Principal Investigator and Host Institution (administrative form)

- Project title;
- Project acronym;
- Project duration;
- Indication of the ERC macro-sector to which the proposal relates, as well as the main relevant sector/sub-sector, according to the ERC classification in force on the date of opening of the proposal submission phase (*Annex 1*);
- Keywords;
- Project abstract;
- *Principal Investigator* and *Host Institution* data;
- Total project cost and budget summary table;
- Table with other funding and relevant time commitment of the *Principal Investigator*; declaration of the PI's time commitment to the project, which cannot be less than 50% under the *Starting Grant* scheme, 40% under the *Consolidator Grant* scheme, and 30% under the *Advanced Grant* scheme, as a condition of eligibility;
- Binding declaration of commitment of the *Host Institution*, signed by its legal representative or a delegate (*Annex 4*);
- Declaration of exceptions to the eligibility period and the extent of the period requested.
- Ethical aspects template (*Annex 5*);
- Supporting documentation for verifying the eligibility for, and length of, the time extension of the period since obtaining the assessable title (if any).



❖ **Part B - Scientific proposal:**

- Extended synopsis of the project proposal, indicating any further relevant sectors and sub-sectors, up to a maximum of four, with respect to what is indicated in part A;
- Curriculum Vitae of the *Principal Investigator*, according to the template available in the application platform;
- *Track record*: according to the template available in the application platform; (
- for the Consolidator and Advanced Grant scheme, the track record must be limited to activities of the last 10 years.

❖ **for Starting and Consolidator Grant schemes only:** a schedule listing the activities carried out as part of the doctoral course and supporting documentation to verify eligibility and the length of time since the award of the assessable degree;

❖ **Part C:**

- Scientific proposal according to the template made available by the MUR and articulated in the following sections:
 - Detailed description of the planned activities, working methods, objectives, state of the art in the relevant scientific field, proposed research methodology, project timeline and expected impact.
 - Human resources and relevant time commitment (the PI's time commitment cannot be less than 50% under the *Starting Grant* scheme, 40% under the *Consolidator Grant* scheme, and 30% under the *Advanced Grant* scheme).
 - Indication and evaluation of any ethical aspects of the research project.
 - Detailed business plan (breakdown of project costs by expenditure items and related time schedule).

6. Applications must be accompanied by the following documents:

- a) Declaration of commitment of the Host Institution on the conditions of independence of the PI. This document (*Annex 4*) must be digitally signed by the legal representative of the institution or his/her delegate. In the latter case, the deed of proxy will be required.
- b) Self-certification concerning the non-existence of ethical issues, or explanatory information on how they will be dealt with, and self-certification concerning the non-existence of sensitive security issues, or explanatory information on how they will be dealt with (*Annex 5*);
- c) Supporting documentation for the request for exceptions to the eligibility period and the extent of the requested period.

7. For all self-certifications, in the event of eligibility for funding, MUR shall proceed to verify the declarations, also requesting, where necessary, appropriate documentary evidence, and in the event of an ascertained false declaration, it shall decree the forfeiture of the funding, without prejudice to civil and criminal liability.



8. Incomplete proposals, due to missing or incomplete parts or sections of the same, will be considered ineligible for evaluation.
9. Each *Principal Investigator* may only submit one proposal under this Procedure and may not, under any circumstance, take part in scientific activities conducted by another *Principal Investigator* within the framework of other projects funded under this Procedure.

Article 12

Evaluation activities. The Evaluation Committee and Auditors

1. Submitted proposals are conditionally admitted to the evaluation phase. Eligibility for funding is in any case conditional on the successful verification of compliance with the application procedure, the completeness of the required documentation, and the fulfilment of the requirements set out herein.
2. At the end of the project proposal transmission procedure, the CINECA system shall carry out a formal check on the regularity and eligibility of proposals. In particular, in order, to meet all eligibility criteria, each proposal:
 - a. must be submitted by the submission deadline;
 - b. must be complete (i.e. all parts or sections of the proposal must be filled out, including any supporting documentation)
3. Verification of participation requirements is carried out by MUR afterwards for eligible projects only. For this activity, MUR, on the basis of the agreement referred to Law no. 178, of 30 December 2020, Art. 1, paragraph 550, can avail itself of the “*Agenzia nazionale per l’attrazione degli investimenti e lo sviluppo d’impresa Spa – Invitalia*”.
4. The evaluation of project proposals consists of:
 - a technical-scientific evaluation
 - a financial adequacy assessment
5. The ex-ante technical-scientific evaluation is divided into two distinct phases as indicated below, aimed at assigning a score in accordance with the evaluation criteria set out in the following articles of this decree:
 - a) PHASE 1 - *preliminary technical-scientific evaluation*
 - b) PHASE 2 - *Project-based technical-scientific evaluation*
6. The technical-scientific evaluation of the project proposals is carried out by Evaluation Committees (CdV), one for each of the twenty-eight ERC research fields, composed of a maximum of 7 members, depending on the heterogeneity of the field and the number of project proposals submitted for each field, ensuring, as far as possible, and taking into account the curricula, the widest disciplinary coverage.
7. Members of the CdV are chosen on the basis of lists, specifically drawn up by the CNVR, of experts with proven and specific experience in each relevant field.
8. Within each Evaluation Committee, the CNVR identifies a coordinator to act as Chairman.



9. Evaluation committees always operate collegially. Meetings of the Committees are validly constituted if half of the members plus one are present.
10. Project proposals are evaluated by the CdV, which, in Phase 2 - *Project-based technical-scientific evaluation*, may call upon the services of a competent external reviewer, if necessary, in the maximum number available.
11. External auditors support the work of the CdV by providing the necessary elements for evaluation of the project proposal.
12. External reviewers referred to in the preceding paragraphs are chosen by the CdV from the MUR's register of scientific experts (REPRISE), or from the lists of reviewers available on national and international databases, as well as from the lists of reviewers filed with the MUR.
13. The CdVs fill in the evaluation sheet specially prepared for each phase of the technical-scientific evaluation. In Phase 2 - *Project-based technical-scientific evaluation* in the above-mentioned activity, external reviewers can be supported.
14. The evaluation sheet drawn up at the end of Phase 2 - *Project-based technical-scientific evaluation* highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the project and expresses for each evaluation criterion a numerical score and a concise justification, as provided for in the specific platform.
15. At the end of each phase of the technical-scientific evaluation, after collegial discussion, the CdV adopts the *Evaluation Summary Report - ESR*, which constitutes the official document of the procedure.
16. CdVs and external auditors operate solely through the CINECA IT platform made available to the Ministry.
17. Each member of the evaluation committees as well as each auditor is obliged to refrain from participating, in any form, in the projects submitted as applications to the call.
18. Possible cases of conflict of interest will be determined in a subsequent measure.
19. Before, or at the time of taking up office, the members of the CdV and the auditors, under their own responsibility, declare in accordance with Art. 46 and 47 of Presidential Decree 445/00, that they are not in any situation, even potential, of conflict of interest.
20. The members of the CdV and the auditors also undertake to maintain the confidentiality of the operations carried out, as well as to respect the terms of the proceedings in the evaluation.
21. The members of the CdV and the auditors operate in complete autonomy and independence, in compliance with the evaluation criteria set out in this notice, on the basis of the technical-administrative guidelines provided by the Ministry.
22. The names of the members of the Evaluation Committees and of the auditors constitute the list of evaluators that will be made public upon completion of the entire procedure set out in this call.
23. As part of the *technical-scientific evaluation*, the CNVR draws up *evaluation guidelines*, containing the methodological and operational indications necessary to guarantee the uniformity of the scores and judgements awarded by the Evaluation Committees.
24. The technical and scientific coordination of the CdV is ensured by the CNVR. The CNVR takes part in the installation meetings of each CdV and provides the necessary methodological and operational



guidance to ensure the uniformity of the scores and judgements covered by the Evaluation Guidelines. The scientific-technical coordination of activities is also done through the definition of a defined programme of activities.

	<i>ATTRIBUTABLE SCORE</i>
❖	1-10

25. The Office of the RUP ensures the necessary technical and administrative support to the CdVs.

Article 13

PHASE 1 - Preliminary technical - scientific evaluation

1. The first phase of project proposal evaluation (*PHASE 1 - Preliminary technical-scientific evaluation*) is conducted by the CdVs and concerns the evaluation of the summary project proposal, the curriculum vitae and the track record of the PI (part B of the project proposal), and will comply with the provisions of *Evaluation Guidelines* issued by CNVR, as well as with what is described below.

2. Each proposal is evaluated based on the following criteria:

<i>THE PROPOSAL</i>	<i>attributable score</i>
<i>Project synopsis;</i> ❖ Quality of the proposal	1-10
<i>PI's cv</i> ❖ Scientific autonomy (for Starting Grant) or leadership in the research field (for Consolidator and Advanced Grant), Track record (for Consolidator and Advanced Grant, covering the last 10 years) ❖ Publications ❖ Awards ❖ More	1-10
<i>Overall assessment</i>	Max. 20

3. The sum of the scores given for each criterion constitutes the overall score awarded to proposals in the first evaluation phase.

4. Proposal which fail to achieve a total score of at least 18/20 will not be admitted to the subsequent technical-scientific evaluation stage -*PHASE 2 - Project-based technical-scientific evaluation*.



5. In the *Starting*, *Consolidator* and *Advanced Grant* schemes, a number of proposals per ERC sector and per ERC sub-sector will be admitted to STEP 2 of the evaluation; in each case, less than three times the number of proposals eligible for the maximum budget.
6. If, in the context of a procedure under the Italian Science Fund, PIs have obtained a score deemed, on the basis of the specific provisions of the call, insufficient for admission to the second stage referred to in the following paragraphs, they shall be considered ineligible in the context of the subsequent call under the same Fund.

Article 14

PHASE 2 - Project-based technical-scientific evaluation

1. PHASE 2 - *Project-based technical-scientific evaluation*, is conducted by the CdVs and will address the project proposal in its entirety (part C of the proposal), in compliance with the provisions set out by the CNVR in the *Evaluation Guidelines*, as well as with what is described in this call for proposals.
2. The CdVs referred to in section 1 of this Article may, where necessary, avail themselves of the support of an external auditor referred to in Art. 1(5)(d).
3. Each proposal is evaluated based on the following criteria:

<i>Scientific proposal</i>	<i>attributable score</i>
a) degree of innovativeness of the proposed study compared to the state of the art in the relevant field, the ambition and feasibility of the research project;	1-5
b) the PI's intellectual capacity, creativity, excellence and scientific skills required to successfully execute the proposed project.	1-5
c) Appropriateness of methodology, and degree of interdisciplinarity, where relevant.	1-5
d) potential impact, including spill-over effects on the host organisation, on society and the territory.	1-5
<i>Human resources</i>	
❖ adequacy of the research team composition and time commitment specified	1-5
<i>Business plan</i>	



❖ adequacy of project planning and management as to the related activities	1-5
<i>Maximum total</i>	30

4. For the purposes of defining the ranking list, the total score is composed of the sum of the scores obtained in STEP 1 - *Preliminary technical-scientific evaluation* and in STEP 2 - *Technical-scientific evaluation - ex ante*.

5. No more than twice the number of projects eligible for the maximum budget will be admitted to the third phase.

Article 15

Evaluation of proposal adequacy and funding definition

1. Following the technical-scientific evaluation carried out by each CdV referred to in the preceding articles, the CNVR accesses the relevant documentation and, in accordance with the final scores awarded to the individual proposals, prepares the final ranking list of projects for each sector and each funding scheme.

2. After analysing the financial requests put forward for each proposal, and on the basis of the indications provided by the CdVs, the CNVR shall determine the appropriate cost and the amount of funding that may be awarded, including by remodelling the costs set out in the proposal, while ensuring at least the minimum contribution envisaged by this call for proposals in Article 9.

3. In particular, due to the fairness opinion expressed by the CNVR, the following are possible:

- recognition of differentiated funding percentages;
- exclusion of projects from the ranking list under Art. 14 of this notice, on the proposal of the CNVR, due to a clear and obvious mismatch between the scientific value and the assessment of the project's appropriateness.

4. At the end of the evaluation process, if two or more projects score *ex aequo*, the project proposal submitted by the candidate with the lowest academic age prevails.

5. In accordance with the rankings, divided by sector and funding scheme, the MUR will publish the decrees approving them.

6. The decrees approving the project rankings, broken down by sector and by funding scheme, in order of score, contain the following information:

- projects accepted for funding, until the available resources are depleted;
- eligible projects not funded due to depleted resources;

7. The decrees approving the rankings referred to in the preceding paragraph will contain the following annexes:

- the list of projects which, at the end of Phase 1 - *Preliminary technical-scientific assessment*, are not admitted to Phase 2 - *Project-based technical-scientific assessment*;



- the list of projects excluded from funding because they did not achieve the minimum eligibility score to be admitted to a grant at the end of Phase 2 - Project-based technical-scientific evaluation;
8. After publication of the decrees referred to in the preceding paragraph, each PI will be able to view the evaluation forms completed in the *technical-scientific evaluation phases* by accessing the reserved area of the CINECA platform.
 9. In a subsequent measure, MUR shall decide on the admission to funding and disbursement of the recognised contributions.

Article 16

Project approval, management and grant disbursement

1. Official communications and *feedback* to the PI and *Host Institution* are made by certified email or through the dedicated CINECA platform
2. The MUR, upon the outcome of the rankings referred to in the previous article, shall proceed against the projects assignees of resources, upon adoption of the funding eligibility decree.
3. It is understood that admitted and eligible projects, as per the ranking list, will be funded until the available resources are depleted.
4. The official start date for projects is set on the 90th day following the issuance of the funding eligibility decree. Activities that have already been carried out or started at that date are therefore not eligible, not even in terms of expenditure.
5. The grant for the implementation of the projects is paid in advance in a single instalment equal to 100% of the recognised grant, directly to the *Host Institutions*.
6. MUR will preliminarily request a specific bank or insurance guarantee from the *Host Institutions* covering the entire amount of the granted contribution.
7. The bank guarantee will not be required from Host Organisations in the case of University Institutions and public research organisations supervised by MUR. In such cases, any amounts to be recovered may be offset, at any time, against any other disbursement or contribution to be allocated to them also under another title. In particular, the funds allocated by MUR in relation to ordinary operations also constitute an appropriate instrument for guaranteeing the resources received pursuant to this decree in the case of state and non-state legally recognised universities, *Istituti universitari a ordinamento speciale*, public research bodies referred to in Article 1(1) of Legislative Decree no. 218 of 25 November 2016, supervised by MUR, and State Institutions of Higher Education in Artistic, Musical and Dancing Education.
8. Where advance payments are made to entities other than those referred to in the previous paragraph, they must be guaranteed by a bank surety or insurance policy or be covered by instruments provided as security by a public body or the Member State to be maintained for the duration of the project proposal. In the absence thereof, and as an "instrument provided as a guarantee by a public body or by the Member State", the party concerned may provide an appropriate undertaking by the supervising



Administration or other public Administration and return to the Ministry of University and Research, out of resources for whatever reason disbursed, the amounts subject to recovery.

9. Variations to the economic breakdown of the project alone are not subject to approval by MUR, but must, however, be the subject of a specific communication also through the IT platform dedicated to this call for proposals according to the indications that will be duly provided.

10. Scientific variations relating to the modification of project objectives are only permitted with the prior approval of the Ministry on the advice of the CdV that carried out the ex-ante evaluation.

11. In the event of transfer of the PI, during the implementation of the project, from the *Host Institution* to another host organisation, the proper implementation of the project must be ensured through a specific agreement regulating the relations between the original *Host Institution* and the new destination of the PI, with particular reference to the use of the equipment already purchased and inventoried at the original *Host Institution* and to the continuation (under the PI's guidance) of the activities of any temporary staff already contracted by the original *Host Institution* for the implementation of the project. In any case, the transfer can only take place with the prior approval of the Ministry.

12. It is understood that reporting obligations will be borne by the Host Institutions involved in the project, according to the expenses actually incurred.

13. In the event of the *Principal Investigator's* transfer to an entity not eligible for the Procedure, including foreign institutions, the MUR shall order the revocation of the grant awarded, the request for repayment of the sums disbursed or the enforcement of the surety guarantee.

14. Within 60 days after the mid-term deadline, the PI shall draft a technical-scientific report highlighting the scientific progress of the project and the degree of achievement of the expected results. These reports will be submitted to the CdVs responsible for the technical-scientific evaluation; any replacements of members no longer available will be arranged by the Ministry in due time for the analysis of these reports. If the CdV considers the scientific progress of the project to be totally unsatisfactory, the Ministry may withdraw the grant.

15. For all publications and scientific products produced as part of the research project, the PI and all members of the research team are required to indicate that they have benefited from funding under this call.

16. Administrative and accounting reporting is carried out on the basis of the "*Guidelines for Reporting and Determining Eligible Expenditure*" to be issued by the Ministry, in accordance with the "cash basis" and by means of a special telematic procedure, within 60 days of the conclusion of the project. For the necessary attestation of compliance with statutory and regulatory provisions and administrative regulations and procedures, all reporting is also subject to central internal audits by appropriate *Host Institution* structures.

17. The Ministry proceeds, also availing itself of the *Agenzia nazionale per l'attrazione degli investimenti e lo sviluppo d'impresa Spa – Invitalia* by virtue of the existing agreement implementing Law no 178 of 30 December 2020, Art. 1(550), to sample checks on final expenditure verifications, by means of desk verifications of reports and field verifications by means of central internal audits, in accordance with the terms and procedures set out in the decree of eligibility for financing. In any case, the criterion of adequacy



of the sample (no less than 10% of the funded projects for an amount at least equal to 10% of the ministerial funding for each funding scheme) is ensured.

18. Violations, ascertained by MUR, of laws and/or regulations, including the indications contained in the "*Guidelines for reporting and determining eligible expenses*", or cases of plagiarism and/or manipulation and/or misrepresentation of data, shall result, without prejudice to civil and criminal liability, in the exclusion of the project proposal from the call or revocation of funding if already granted, and the automatic exclusion of the PI from subsequent MUR calls for tenders for a period of five years from the date of the assessment.

19. Within 60 days after the conclusion of the project, the PI shall draw up a final scientific report on the progress of the activities and the research results obtained or expected, with an annexed list of the publications related to the project with the PI's name as first name (or corresponding authors), and shall be issued to the Ministry telematically.

20. The report must also include a detailed list of the publications and other scientific products produced within the framework of the research project, with an indication of where the funding came from.

21. The final technical-scientific report will be submitted to the CdVs responsible for evaluating the proposal; MUR will arrange in time for the analysis of these reports the replacement of CdV members no longer available. If the CdV considers the scientific results of the project to be totally unsatisfactory, the Ministry may revoke the grant.

Article 17

Obligations and penalties for Host Organisations/Beneficiary Entities

1. Organisations chosen as *Host Institutions* by researchers applying to be *Principal Investigators* must provide them, prior to submitting their proposal, with a declaration in which they undertake to host them, as well as a guarantee that they will be able to access the premises and infrastructures necessary for the working group they intend to coordinate, to carry out the project.

2. Following the publication of the rankings, *Host Institutions*, as beneficiaries, shall stipulate a contract with PIs who are not already permanent or fixed-term employees.

3. *Host institutions* are also obliged, under penalty of forfeiture of the contribution:

- a) to comply with all the conditions laid down in this decree and in the relevant funding eligibility decree;
- b) to ensure that the interventions carried out do not differ from those identified in the application submitted;
- c) to provide, within the time limits and in the manner prescribed by this decree and the acts resulting from it, all the documentation and information requested;
- d) to ensure that the planned activities begin and end within the deadlines laid down in this decree;
- e) to ensure the punctual and complete implementation of the activities, under the scientific responsibility of the PI, in accordance with the submitted and eligible application;



- f) to keep, for a period of at least 5 (five) years from the date of submission of the final accounts, the accounting, technical and administrative documents proving the expenses incurred and reported, as well as all the documents relating to the expenditure process (from the acquisition of the estimates up to the delivery of the goods acquired) and to present them, in the event of inspections;
- g) to undertake not to cumulate the contributions under this call with other contributions obtained for the same expenses.

Article 18

Waivers, forfeitures and sanctions

1. The grant awarded is subject to revocation and the beneficiaries are subject to total forfeiture of the grant, if they fail to comply with all the indications and obligations contained in this decree or in the subsequent guidelines provided by the Ministry, including the "*Guidelines for Reporting and Determining Eligible Expenses*", and if one of the following conditions arises:
 - i. the declarations made and signed in the grant application are false;
 - ii. the realisation of the intervention differs from what was declared in the project accepted for funding;
 - iii. the PI has obtained other grants for the same expenses reported;
 - iv. the PI does not guarantee the minimum time commitment defined in the preceding articles
 - v. the planned activity is not carried out within the deadline indicated for the conclusion of the project, except for possible extensions, not exceeding 3 months, determined by force majeure and approved by the MUR;
 - vi. the PI and the *Host Institution*, each to the extent of their competence, do not submit all the required documentation when reporting, or do not produce it in case of inspections.
2. In the event of forfeiture or revocation, if the contribution has already been paid, the *Host Institution* shall return the sums received. In this regard, the MUR reserves the right to offset these sums against fundings of any kind granted by the Ministry to the Host Organisations, including operating funds, or to claim the guarantee.
3. If the PIs intend to renounce the grant awarded and/or the implementation of the project, they must notify the Ministry through the IT platform made available by MUR. In such cases, the MUR will proceed to revoke the contribution granted and request the *Host Institution* to return the sums disbursed, or to initiate compensation procedures using resources of any kind granted by the Ministry to the Host Organisations, including operating funds, or to claim the guarantee or request repayment of the sums disbursed to the Supervising Administration or other public Administration set up as guarantor.



Article 19

Verifications and inspections

1. MUR reserves the right to carry out checks to ascertain compliance with the obligations set out in the grant award decision, the truthfulness of the declarations and information produced, and the eligibility of the expenses reported.
2. Without prejudice to civil and criminal liabilities, MUR's finding of violations of the law entails the revocation of the funding and the automatic exclusion of the PI from subsequent MUR calls for proposals, for a period of 5 (five) years from the date of the finding.

Article 20

Open access

1. Each PI must guarantee open access (free online access for any user) to all *peer-reviewed* scientific publications related to the results obtained within the project. In particular, the PI must:
 - i. deposit, as soon as possible, and at the latest at the time of publication of the research results, an automatically processable electronic copy of the published version or the final version accepted for publication (after *peer-review*) in an appropriate repository for scientific publications. The PI must also undertake to deposit the data necessary to validate the results presented in the deposited scientific publications;
 - ii. ensure open access to the deposited publication and related data - via the archive - at the latest: either at the time of publication, if the publisher makes a free electronic version available, or within six months of publication (twelve months for publications in the social sciences and humanities) in any other case;
 - iii. ensure open access - via the repository - to the bibliographic metadata identifying the deposited publication. Bibliographic metadata must be in a standardised format and must include all of the following elements:
 - a. the terms '*MUR Open Access*';
 - b. the name of the programme, the project acronym and the contract number;
 - c. the date of publication and duration of the ban period, if applicable;
 - d. a persistent identifier;
 - e. all the items mandated by Article 4 of Decree-Law No. 91 of 8 August 2013, converted with amendments by Law No. 112 of 7 October 2013, and, in particular, 'a project sheet mentioning all the subjects that have contributed to their implementation'.
2. The above prescriptions about the publication of research data does not modify any confidentiality obligations, as well as obligations relating to the protection of personal data, all of which remains unaffected.
3. As an exception, PIs are also exempted from providing open access to specific parts of their research data, if open access to such data would jeopardise the achievement of the main research objective.



In this case, the PI must also deposit a note in his or her name in the archive, alongside the publication, explaining the reasons for not making parts of the research data available.

Article 21

Person in charge of the procedure

1. The person in charge of the procedure is the Director of Office III of the Directorate-General for Research.

Article 22

Communications and information

1. The forms required to participate in this Procedure will be published in full on the dedicated website <https://fis-submission.mur.gov.it>.
2. Requests for information and/or clarifications concerning the Procedure may be sent to the dedicated e-mail address fis@mur.gov.it always indicating in the subject line "**Bando FIS 2**". Requests received in a different manner will therefore not be processed.
3. The requests referred to in paragraph 2 above will be answered in aggregate form; FAQs relating to the Procedure will be published in the dedicated section of the portal.
4. This decree shall be sent to the members of the bodies for prior checking of legitimacy.
5. The effects of this decree are subject to the checks referred to in the preceding paragraph.