

Fellowships for excellent researchers R2-R4

(Shortened English version for evaluators with additional remarks)

Objective and purpose of the call

The call is aimed to support basic and applied research carried out in Slovakia by excellent Slovak and foreign researchers in the career stages from R2 to R4.

The call consists of 3 types of support according to the career stage of the supported researcher:

- Researcher R2 Fellowship
- Researcher R3 Fellowship
- Researcher R4 Fellowship

Support for researchers during the implementation of their projects will be provided in form of a contribution to salary costs and funds for their research **within research organisations in Slovakia**. The call aims to support excellent researchers across all R&D sectors, to attract foreign top researchers, and to prevent the brain drain of domestic top researchers abroad. Support from this call will increase the capacity of excellent researchers in Slovakia, increase the attractiveness and internationalisation of the Slovak research environment, which will have an impact on a cooperation with research communities abroad.

Duration of the project

The time eligibility of the project is set **at the earliest from the date of the researcher's employment** for the project, but at the earliest from the date the grant agreement entries into force.

The duration of project implementation is set at a **minimum of 12 months** and a **maximum of 24 months**.

The project's eligibility period ends on 30. 6. 2026¹.

Eligible applicants

Eligible applicants are **non-business research organisations and research infrastructures, not individual researchers.**

Applicants will act as host institutions of a individual excellent domestic/foreign researcher.

Eligible applicants are from:

- a) 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,
- b) The **sector of public research institutions**, which consists of public research institutions,
- c) The **higher education sector** consisting of public universities, state universities, private universities and their established legal entities carrying out R&D;

¹ i.e. research activities must be completed no later than 2 months before the date on which the envisaged milestones and targets from the implementation of the RRP investments are to be completed

- d) The **non-profit sector**, which consists of civic associations, non-profit organisations, associations of legal entities carrying out research and development (entities referred to in point (d) must demonstrate the performance of R&D activities by statutes or by a memorandum in force on the date of the application submission);
- e) The **business sector**, which consists of entrepreneurs within the meaning of Section 2(2)(a) of the Commercial Code, that, within their business activities, also carry out research and development (entities referred to in point e) must have the subject of activity 'research and development' registered in the Commercial Register at the date of the application submission).

Purpose of the call

The purpose of the call is to individually support excellent Slovak and foreign researchers in the career stages of R2 to R4 in carrying out fundamental and/or industrial research or independent research in **Slovak research performing organisations that will act as an applicant and as a researcher's host organisation**.

The call does not define specific eligible scientific areas or topics – these are determined by the researcher and the applicant based on mutual agreement, their own focus and expertise.

To comply with the conditions of the call:

- **The recommended amount of working time of the researcher 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.** In the case of reduced working hours, the amount of all contributions shall be reduced proportionally. Evaluators will be provided with information on the working time of the excellent researcher/principal investigator for the project to assess ambitiousness and feasibility of the project.
- assign the researcher to the appropriate career stage, according to his/her characteristics, competences, and experience at the time of the application. For the purpose of correct assignment, the applicant will be based on [the European Framework for Research Careers](#) or [the Research Profiles Descriptors](#);
- assign applications to one of the following types of support according to the identified stage of the researcher's career:
 - A) Researcher R2 Fellowship**
 - B) Researcher R3 Fellowship**
 - C) Researcher R4 Fellowship**

The accuracy of the assignment of the researcher's career stage will be assessed during peer review evaluation.

The results of the implementation of the project must be specific deliverables, which the applicant is obliged to identify in the project application.

There must be milestones during the whole project implementation period. Milestones in the project must be clearly defined, appropriate, realistic, and achievable in relation to the proposed activities.

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. The implementation of the activities takes place without planned direct application or use in practice. The primary objective of independent research is to independently conduct fundamental and/or industrial research with aim to disseminate acquired knowledge that is not intended for commercial use.

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 or for achieving a significant improvement of existing products, processes or services. This includes the development of parts of complex systems and may also include the construction of prototypes under laboratory conditions or in conditions with simulated interfaces linked to existing systems, as well as pilot lines, if they are necessary for industrial research, mostly for generic technology approval.

Eligible costs

Simplified cost options in the form of unit costs will apply to:

- contribution to the researcher's salary costs;
- contribution to research costs.

Simplified cost options in the form of flat rate will apply to:

- contribution to the indirect costs – as 15 % of eligible direct staff costs.

Proof of expenditures actually incurred shall apply to:

- expenditure of the research team of an excellent researcher falling under the type of support:
B) Researcher R3 Fellowship; or
C) Researcher R4 Fellowship.

Expenditure on the research team shall be voluntary, based on an agreement between the applicant and the researcher, if necessary for the implementation of the project. The table below shows the limits for the contribution per research team, i.e. the maximum amounts that the applicant can claim for support types B) or C) and for 100 % of the researcher's working time (full-time) on the project.

Total eligible costs	Type of Support – Researcher's Career Stage		
	R2	R3	R4
contribution to salary costs*	EUR 4 243/month	EUR 4 823/month	EUR 5 396/month
contribution to research costs*	EUR 1 300/month	EUR 1 300/month	EUR 1 300/month
contribution to indirect costs **	max. EUR 636/month	max. EUR 1 023/month	max. EUR 1 484/month
contribution to research team ***	—	max. EUR 2 000/month	max. EUR 4 500/month
Total max. EUR	EUR 6 179/month	EUR 9 146/month	EUR 12 680/month

* unit cost for the type of support, at 100 % of the researcher's work and when conducting independent research by a non-companies or basic research by company

** maximum amount/limit – the actual amount of the contribution will be determined by the researcher's engagement, the actual and proven expenditure of the research team and the research carried out by the applicant

*** maximum amount/limit

Evaluation process

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 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>The quality and adequacy of the proposed objectives of the project.</p> <p>Relevance of the problems/needs to which the project is aimed.</p> <p>The project goes beyond the currently available solutions, procedures, etc. <i>“beyond the state of the art”</i>.</p> <p>Appropriateness, timeliness, and relevance of the proposed methodology to the objectives of the project.</p> <p>The quality and adequacy of the researcher’s professional experience, expertise, competences, and skills.</p> <p>The quality and adequacy of the host organisation in relation to the project and the researcher.</p> <p>The quality and adequacy of the conditions that the host organisation will ensure and provide to the researcher (e.g. additional training, training, supervision/mentoring, possibilities to build its own research team, etc.).</p> <p>The quality of two-way knowledge transfer between the researcher and the host organisation.</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 assumption of a positive impact on the further career of the researcher, the assumption of a positive impact on the applicant/host organisation.</p> <p>The significance of the expected 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
<p>Quality and efficiency of the project plan, feasibility of planned activities.</p> <p>The coherence and logical framework of the work packages and the adequacy of the resources allocated to them, the adequacy of the proposed milestones and deliverables.</p> <p>Estimation of implementation risks, quality of proposed measures.</p> <p>Capacities (personnel, professional, technical, infrastructure, other) of the applicant/host organisation.</p>	

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)).

Template of the project application and its annexes to be filled by an applicant with all the required aspects is available here: <https://vaia.gov.sk/en/2023/08/16/fellowships-for-excellent-researchers-r2-r4/>

Documents for applicant can contain more information necessary for the preparation of the project application.

The Shortened English version for evaluators contains information necessary for evaluators, however they can obtain more information in the above-mentioned documents, if needed.