



2026 EUROfusion Bernard Bigot Researcher Grants

Guide for applicants

CfP-TRED-AWP26-TRED-02
2026 Annual Work Plan

EUROfusion Training and Education Office
ERG26application@euro-fusion.org

1. Introduction

The EUROfusion Bernard Bigot Researcher Grant action is set up through calls for participation to the EUROfusion Consortium Members. The evaluation of submitted proposals is performed through a set of procedures in order to ensure transparency and excellence in the selected projects. This guide details the procedures to be followed for these actions.

2. Eligibility to the programme

The following eligibility criteria apply.

- 1) This action supports the initial training of researchers, of all nationalities, namely:

Researchers/Engineers in possession of a doctoral degree (PhD) who have completed their PhD and defended their thesis in the two years preceding the deadline for proposal submission of the present call. The PhD defence date must be between 12 May 2023 and 12 May 2025.

In case the researcher/engineer has not started her/his contract at the time of the application for the grant, the Consortium member will have to provide a declaration of intent to recruit the researcher/engineer under an employment contract or equivalent contract compatible with the national legislation. She/he must be recruited at the latest by 1 July 2026.

- 2) The candidate's research project must be on a scientific or technical topic relevant to the objectives of the Work Plan for the implementation of the European Research Roadmap to the Realisation of Fusion Energy.
- 3) The implementation of this action will be through the *EUROfusion Consortium* for the implementation of the European Research Roadmap to the Realisation of Fusion Energy. The applicant must therefore have a contract with either a EUROfusion Member or one of its Affiliated Entities. The post-doctoral contract (or equivalent) can be shared between two EUROfusion Members or their Affiliated Entities, allowing the post-doctoral work to be conducted successively in two complementary laboratories.
- 4) The application must be supported and submitted by the relevant EUROfusion General Assembly member(s).

3. Evaluation criteria and procedures

The evaluation of proposals is carried out by the EUROfusion Programme Manager with the assistance of independent experts.

3.1 Selection of the evaluation panel

The EUROfusion Programme Manager will nominate expert evaluators. Experts perform evaluations on a personal basis, not as representatives of their (previous) employer, their country or any other entity. They are expected to be independent, impartial and objective, and to behave throughout in a professional manner. They sign an appointment letter, including a confidentiality and conflict of interest declaration. Confidentiality rules must be adhered to at all times, before, during and after the evaluation.

Conflicts of interest: Under the terms of the appointment letter, experts must declare beforehand any known conflicts of interest and must immediately inform EUROfusion if one becomes apparent during the course of the evaluation. EUROfusion will take whatever action is necessary to remove any conflict.

Confidentiality: The appointment letter also requires experts to maintain strict confidentiality with respect to the whole evaluation process. Under no circumstance may an expert attempt to contact an applicant on his own account, either during the evaluation or afterwards.

At the beginning of the evaluation, the experts will be briefed by EUROfusion on the evaluation procedure, the experts' responsibilities, the issues involved in the particular area/objective and any other relevant item.

3.2 Selection criteria of the proposal

On receipt by EUROfusion, proposals will be assessed against the selection criteria specified herein. Proposals that do not fulfil these criteria will not be included in the evaluation.

A proposal will be selected only if it meets all the following conditions:

- It is received by EUROfusion before the deadline given in the call;
- It is compliant with the criteria defined under section 2;
- It is complete and includes all documentation required in section 4.

3.3 The evaluation procedure

The evaluation procedure will be carried out in three stages:

- evaluation of the application content by the experts in view of the establishment of a short list (the number of short-listed candidates should be at maximum twice the number of foreseen grants);
- interviews of all short-listed candidates;
- consensus meeting to define the final ranking of the proposals.

Scoring

Each candidate will be evaluated against the pre-determined evaluation criteria given in Annex 1 and scored according to the thresholds and weightings also given in Annex 1.

Each criterion will be scored out of 5. Tenth marks can be given. The scores indicate the following with respect to the criterion under examination:

- 1 - *Poor*
- 2 - *Fair*
- 3 - *Good*
- 4 - *Very Good*
- 5 - *Excellent*

Short Listing

The evaluation of the candidates by the experts in view of the establishment of a short list will be carried out in the following steps:

- In the first step the experts are acting individually; they do not discuss the proposals with each other, nor with any third party. The experts record their individual opinion in an Individual Assessment Report (IAR) giving scores and comments against the evaluation criteria. Each proposal will be assessed in detail by two experts. EUROfusion will take the necessary steps to assure the quality of the Individual Assessment Reports, with particular attention given to clarity, consistency, and appropriate level of detail. If important changes are necessary, the reports will be referred back to the experts concerned.
- In the second step, all experts will hold a consensus meeting under the chairmanship of the EUROfusion Programme Manager or his representative to discuss the complete set of proposals. The experts having assessed a same proposal will discuss to reach a consensus on the scoring. All criteria where a significant difference appears (more than 1 point) will be addressed. When, after the discussion, differences in scoring subsist, the average marks will be used for this (these) criterion (criteria). The outcome of this meeting is a summary table showing the scores of all candidates agreed between the experts. In case it is impossible to reach an agreement between the expert evaluators, EUROfusion will designate a new expert evaluator to act as arbitrator. EUROfusion will take the necessary steps to assure the quality of the Individual Assessment Reports, with particular attention given to clarity, consistency, and appropriate level of detail. If important changes are necessary, the reports will be referred back to the experts concerned.
- Based on the definitive marks which are agreed between the experts at the end of this consensus meeting, a short list will be established by EUROfusion. The short list will include not more than twice the number of foreseen grants.

Interviews with the short-listed candidates

The evaluation will then progress toward individual interviews of the short-listed candidates. The interview board will be constituted of all the experts involved in the evaluation process and of the EUROfusion Programme Manager (or his representative), who acts as chair of the board. The secretariat of the board is provided by EUROfusion.

At the interview it can happen that new facts emerge about the details of application. Since the interview is the first opportunity for the whole Panel to review the application in detail, it is possible that afterwards the Panel can revise the marks given during the first step.

EUROfusion shall ensure fair and equal treatment of the candidates in the interview and in the following Consensus meeting. Presentation in English shall be requested.

The interview process and criteria are detailed under Annex II.

Consensus meeting, final scores and ranking

At the end of the interview the board will proceed with a debriefing and attribute an interview mark to each candidate.

After the interview, the board will hold a final meeting in order to:

- (1) Agree on the final score attributed to each short-listed candidate. The final score is the sum of the two marks attributed at the end of the first stage assessment (consensus meeting) and during the interview, with a weight of 40% and 60% respectively.
- (2) Produce a final ranking of candidates and a proposal for the attribution of the grants.

Assessment of financial proposal

The evaluation board will assess the financial proposal included in the grant applications and recommend the level of financial support for training and mission costs for the grants to be awarded.

4 Proposal content

An eligible proposal shall contain the information as noted in the following table. The required filename is indicated in the second column. Replace “{Lastname}” with your last name. In case the last name contains spaces, please replace all spaces with an underscore. All the PDF files below should be combined into one .ZIP-file with the name “**ERG26_FP9_1_{Lastname}.zip**”. For example for Dr. Smith Jones, this filename is *ERG26_FP9_1_Smith_Jones.zip*.

Content	Filename
Application	
Application form including information on the PhD, list of references, project proposal and consent for the data protection.	ERG26_01_{Lastname}.pdf
1-page personal letter . Header is not required. Please consider adding any additional information you would like the expert selection panel to consider while evaluating your application. You also have the opportunity to share a) an achievement in your life or work that you are particularly proud of and b) a challenge you faced in your life and work, how you have overcome it and what you have learned from it. Alternatively, please share your motivation for applying for the EUROfusion grant.	ERG26_02_{Lastname}.pdf
A letter from the relevant EUROfusion General Assembly member addressing the application to EUROfusion and certifying that the post-doctoral contract with the EUROfusion Consortium Member or its Third Party, has started or declaration of intent to recruit the researcher/engineer under an employment contract or equivalent contract compatible with the national legislation.	ERG26_03_{Lastname}.pdf
A supporting statement must be provided from all Institution(s)/ Organisation(s) involved in hosting the candidate. <i>Optional: An additional supporting letter(s) may be provided by individuals providing support to the candidate during the grant (e.g. from a EUROfusion project leader or task force leader).</i>	ERG26_04_{Lastname}.pdf
Candidate Background	
The CV of the candidate with all relevant information (specifically the European and international experience). Explicit consent to personal data processing is given in the application form.	ERG26_05_{Lastname}.pdf
Publication list of the candidate. In case the PhD thesis is not in English, those scientific publications that are written in English should be included.	ERG26_06_{Lastname}.pdf
A copy of the PhD thesis of the candidate. If the PhD thesis is not available in English, please provide the thesis in the original language together with a 2-3 pages summary of the thesis in English.	ERG26_07_{Lastname}.pdf
Proof of the date of the successful PhD defence .	ERG26_08_{Lastname}.pdf

Mentor Background	
Short CV of the mentor(s) and main relevant publications (maximum length: 3 pages per mentor). Explicit consent to personal data processing is given in the application form.	ERG26_09_{Lastname}.pdf
Financial summary	
<p>A financial summary for resources required by the EUROfusion Member or its Affiliated Entity for the implementation of the proposal, including the following information per year and researcher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Salary cost (including fees, superannuation and social charges). b) Training and specific costs related to the successful execution of the research project, if any (e.g. conferences fees (max two conferences) and training courses fees, purchase of hardware and/or consumables necessary for a successful implementation of the project). c) Travel costs (travel to conferences and training courses, mission for meetings, working sessions, experiments and visits to other laboratories) with a summary indicating the purpose and duration of the stays. Each visit/mission shall be for a duration shorter than 3 months. One mission of 5 days to the EUROfusion Headquarters (Garching, Germany) shall be included on the plan for participation in the EUROfusion Grants induction week. <p>The financial summary shall include a detailed justification for the requested financial support for training and mission costs. Here, the template <i>ERG Financial Summary Template</i> should be used, which is added to this call.</p>	<p>ERG26_10_{Lastname}.xls <i>Note: this item should be submitted in Excel format.</i></p>

The above-mentioned documentation shall be uploaded to the online proposal form in IMS and shall be saved to single PDF files for each of the above-mentioned items (except for the Financial Summary, which shall be Excel). Follow the naming structure for every file in the right column of the table. These PDF files should be combined into one .ZIP-file with the name ***“ERG26_FP9_1_{Lastname}.zip”*** and uploaded to the online proposal form in IMS.

Only complete and correct proposals will be considered.

5 Personal Data Protection (GDPR)

The EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is a privacy and data protection regulation in the European Union with effect from the 25th May 2018. The GDPR imposes obligations on organisations that control or process personal data and introduces rights and protections for EU citizens. EUROfusion is committed to ensuring that candidates’ privacy is protected and strictly adhere to the provisions of all relevant Data Protection legislation, including GDPR, ensuring all personal data is handled in line with the principles outlined in the regulation.

In compliance with article 13 of the GDPR, EUROfusion provides the following information:

Type of Data processed:

Personal data present in the application or eventually communicated with supplementary documents of the application, by the candidates. As well as personal data relating to mentors. The data processed does not fall within the scope of application of articles 9 and 10 of the Regulation.

Name and address of the Controller:

Max-Planck-Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaften e.V.
Hofgartenstraße 8, 80539 Munich
Phone: +49 (89) 2108 -0

Name and address of the Data Protection Officer:

Heidi Schuster
Hofgartenstraße 8, D-80539 Munich
Phone: +49 (89) 2108-1554
Email address: datenschutz@mpg.de

The personal data collected within the present call for participation will be processed for the sole use of the evaluation and selection of the proposals for the awarding of the AWP26 EUROfusion Researcher Grants.

Both the candidates and the mentors express their consent to the processing of personal data (GDPR, art. 6, par. 1, letter a) necessary for carrying out the selection procedure and to allow EUROfusion Programme Management Unit (PMU) to fulfil the obligations related to the Grant Agreement (GDPR, art. 6, par. 1, letter b).

The data will be processed:

- through the use of manual and automated systems;
- by people authorized to carry out these tasks, pursuant to the law;
- with the adoption of adequate measures to guarantee the security of the data and to prevent access to the same by unauthorized third parties.

There are no automated decision-making processes.

The recipients of the personal data are the EUROfusion PMU members involved in the process and the evaluation panel composed by external experts.

The personal data collected for the purpose of the selection will be stored for the period of the evaluation process. Following the decision of the General Assembly on the list of candidates to be awarded, the personal data included in not awarded applications will be deleted. As regards the personal data provided in the awarded applications, they will be stored in the EUROfusion PMU systems until the formalisation of the Task Agreement.

The candidates, as well as the mentors are entitled to the rights of access (GDPR, Article 15), rectification (GDPR, Article 16), erasure (GDPR, Article 17, para. 1), restriction of processing (GDPR, Article 18), data portability (GDPR, Article 20) and withdrawal of consent (GDPR, Article 7, para. 3). They also have the right to submit an objection to the supervisory authority. For the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft (MPG), this is the Bayerische Landesamt für Datenschutzaufsicht, Postfach 1349, 91504 Ansbach, Germany.

6 Recommendations for applicants

The following recommendations are given to candidates to optimize their proposal and presentation:

- The candidate and mentor should have a close interaction during the preparation of the work plan. A good briefing of the candidate by the mentor is strongly advised, especially if the candidate is from outside the Fusion field.
- The candidate is strongly advised to have a rehearsal of his/her presentation at his/her institute and/or at the institute supporting his proposal. If needed this can be done via Videoconference to avoid unnecessary travelling. Some of the (future) colleagues can act as 'shadow expert panel' to train the candidate for possible questions he/she might expect in the actual interview.
- Candidates that are involving different institutes in their work plan should contact responsible people at these institutes to ascertain that their proposal is supported on a managerial level, to avoid later surprises (e.g. their Work Plan or Training Programme not being supported). The mentor should have an active role in making sure that the proposal has the full support from all Parties involved.
- **The interviews are expected to be held by video meeting in the period between 21 July to 1 August 2025. Candidates are expected to be available for the interview.**

7 Indicative timeline for the EUROfusion Researcher Grant evaluation

Event	Date
Launch of the call	28 March 2025
Deadline for proposals	12 May 2025
Check proposals for eligibility and send to referees	End of May 2025
Referees return the Individual Assessment Reports 1 st consensus meeting with referees. <i>In this meeting the candidates are shortlisted for the interviews.</i>	End of June 2025
Interviews (per video meeting) between:	21 July – 1 August 2025
Expected General Assembly endorsement	7-8 October 2025

Annex I: Evaluation criteria, thresholds, and weightings for the short-listing

EUROfusion Bernard Bigot Researcher Grants		
Criterion:	Threshold	Weighting
Research project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The fusion relevance - The scientific novelty - The proposed method - The ambition - The SMARTness of the objectives (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) 	3/5	40%
Training and competence development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consistency with work plan - Quality of career development plan - Professional environment and mentorship 	3/5	30%
Candidate background/competence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Motivation and diversity - Educational background - Scientific publications - International experience and language proficiency - Professional achievements - Future potential of the candidate in fusion 	3/5	30%

Proposals that fail to reach the threshold as indicated for each individual criterion and at least 75% in the total mark shall be excluded from the final ranking.

Annex II: Evaluation criteria for the interview

Individual interviews will last about 40 minutes and will consist of

- a presentation by the candidate (maximum 10 minutes)
- questions by the interview board (about 30 minutes).

The evaluation criteria for the interview will be based on the following criteria:

Criterion	Threshold	Weighting
Quality of the presentation	3/5	1/3
Scientific/technical background	3/5	1/3
Quality of the project and development plan	3/5	1/3

Interviews that fail to reach the threshold as indicated for each individual criterion and at least 3.5 out of 5 in the total mark shall be excluded from the final ranking.

The final score is the sum of the two marks attributed at the end of the first stage assessment and during the interview, with a weight of 40% and 60% respectively. Please note that the experts panel may decide to amend the marks for the research and training programme given in the Individual Assessment Report (see Section 3.3.3).