

Horizon Europe Work Programme 2021-22:

Widening Participation and Spreading Excellence

Topic: HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-TALENTS-01-01:

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

IMPORTANT NOTICE This document is the result of a compilation of questions received by potential applications prior the deadline and answers provided by the European Commission. Its intention is to help potential applicants. It does not however replace the topic text. This document is a working document being revised on a regular basis.

Contents

1- General questions	1
2-Questions concerning the ERA Chair holder	2
3-Specific questions on eligibility	4
4- Questions related with the preparation of proposals	5
5-Financial issues	6

1-General questions:

1. What are "ERA Chairs"?

ERA Chairs actions will attract in a sustainable manner outstanding scientists and innovators to universities or research organisations in Widening countries. The leadership of an ERA Chair holder and the creation of a permanent and excellent research group in the chosen scientific field will ensure excellence, visibility and better integration in the European Research Area, as well as fostering competitiveness in research funding and promoting institutional reforms aligned with ERA priorities.

2. What is the difference between ERA Chairs and ERC grants?

ERA Chairs actions offer conditions for institutions in target countries to attract and maintain excellent researchers and innovators (the ERA Chair holder but also the members of the associated research team). Another strategic difference is that the action require host institutions, in close cooperation with ERA Chair holders, to address structural weaknesses and achieve research excellence in the field of choice. In the case of ERC grants they are restricted to frontier research for which the sole criterion of selection is scientific

excellence, thus the action is aimed to those already excellent while the ERA Chair holders support universities and research organisations to develop their potential for excellence.

3. Which institutions are eligible to apply for HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-TALENTS-01-01: ERA Chairs?

To apply for an ERA Chair, the coordinator must be a research organization or University located in a "Widening country" as defined in the Work Programme part "Widening Participation and Spreading Excellence" of Horizon Europe. If there is a partner organization, in which the proposed ERA chair holder is working, this can be located in any country in the world except the country of the coordinator.

4. What is requested from institutions applying under topic HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-TALENTS-01-01: ERA Chairs?

The proposed activities should upgrade from the current situation possibly through investments of the coordinator in research projects, facilities and infrastructures and/or a better use of the installed research capacity (in particular of EU co-funded research infrastructures & facilities). The ERA Chair holder should also receive support to take on her/his tasks and duties including, for example, access to research facilities, supervision of researchers, teaching duties (if any) and capacity to apply freely to national and international funding.

A further request is for the coordinator to ensure the sustainability of the ERA Chair research team after the end of the Horizon Europe funding through *inter alia* the appointment of the leader of the research group on a permanent basis during the initial 3 years of the duration of the grant.

Compliance with ERA priorities¹, including the European Charter for Researchers & Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers², are also requested.

5. What happens if the ERA Chair holder fails to move to the coordinator as foreseen in proposals or leaves during the implementation of the grant?

The ERA Chair holder is a key element of the action and the excellence of the future ERA Chair holder and match between the candidate and the foreseen activities are two of the fundamental elements assessed in proposals. Therefore if he/she does not take the position or leaves, the grant will be terminated (a minor and justified delay might be allowed to close ongoing activities). Only if the ERA Chair holder leaves for reason of *force majeure* during the course of the action (and not at its beginning or during the initial phases of implementation), will the coordinator be allowed to replace the ERA Chair holder provided the replacement does not have a negative impact on the proposed work plan.

3-Questions concerning the ERA Chair holder

5. What is the profile of an ERA Chair holder?

Prospective Chairs should typically be outstanding researchers and/or innovators in the given field of research, with a proven record of effective leadership. Their previous achievements should provide them with all the personal and professional experience required to establish their own team and help the research organisation to significantly improve its research performance and to be more successful in obtaining competitive funding in the selected field of research.

6. What will be the key factors in the evaluation of the potential ERA Chairs holders?

¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2012:0392:FIN>

² <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reco/2005/251/oj>

The excellence of the proposed ERA Chair candidate, the match between the proposed candidate and the tasks, and the commitment of the prospective ERA Chair holder to the Widening institution will be part of the assessment of proposals, as all those factors are relevant to the objectives of the action.

7. Do ERA Chair holders need to be European?

No, the ERA Chair holders can be of any nationality and indeed may come from the country in which the research organisation or university is located.

8. Can the partner organization be a legal entity different from the employer of the future ERA Chair holder?

No, the only possible partner has to be the current employer of the candidate to the ERA Chair position as stated in the WP.

Does the ERA Chair employer need to be informed of the application? Will this information be made available by the Commission services if the proposal fails?

There is no obligation for the candidate to an ERA Chair holder position to inform his/her employer. Information related to unsuccessful applications will not be disclosed by the Commission services. Experts evaluators are legally bound by the same confidentiality rules.

8. Can the selected organisation or university appoint as an ERA Chair holder someone already working for it?

Internal candidates, though not excluded a priori, are not in line with the objective of the action to attract external talent. Thus, except in duly justified cases, proposals where the future ERA Chair holder already has contractual links with the coordinator institution in the Widening country, fail one of the main aims of the action.

9. Can ERA Chairs holders also be holders of an ERC grant?

Yes, there is no incompatibility with ERC grants.

10. How much time must the ERA Chair devote to the research work?

ERA Chair holders might move on a temporary or permanent basis to the coordinator's premises including possible part-time work and multiple stays. However, adequate arrangements should ensure the supervision and management of the newly created research team as well as of any students, graduates students or Post-doctoral fellows under the supervision of the ERA Chair holder. Moreover, when this is compatible with the nature of the coordinator, the ERA Chair holder is expected to take on some teaching duties.

11. How are institutions expected to identify the candidate in view of submitting an application to HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-TALENTS-01-01: ERA Chairs?

There are no prerequisites on how the identification and/or selection of the potential ERA Chair is conducted by coordinators. It is expected, nevertheless, the close involvement of candidates in the preparation of proposals.

12. Does the organisation or university have to employ the ERA Chair holder? Should employment conditions be already detailed in proposals?

Hiring the ERA Chair holder is optional and depends on the working arrangements agreed between the two parties. The Work Programme gives flexibility on this matter allowing for an ERA Chair holder to move to the coordinator's premises for secondment periods from the partner institution or under other legal arrangements (e.g., leave without pay, sabbatical licences) even for part-time work and multiple stays are also permitted. However, the contractual arrangements and the timeline of the ERA Chair holder's stays at the coordinator should be indicated in the proposal as well as the salary, travel and daily allowances and/or other perks offered. And if, at any stage, an employment contract is foreseen, the future contractual arrangements should be indicated.

13. Does the organisation/university have to continue to employ the ERA Chair holder once the contract ends?

No, there is no requirement in the grant agreement between the European Commission and the organisation/university to employ the ERA Chair holder beyond the lifetime of the grant. However, to ensure the sustainability of the ERA Chair research team its leader must be appointed during the duration of the grant in a permanent position. This leader might be the ERA Chair holder.

4-Specific questions on eligibility

14. Can a proposal request a contribution below € 1.5 or above € 2.5 million?

The range € 1.5-2.5 million for the requested EU contribution in ERA Chairs proposals is indicative and not an eligibility condition. Therefore, proposals requesting lower or higher amounts are possible but, in all instances, requests need to be justified and will be assessed during the evaluation of proposals.

15. What is the minimum, typical and maximum duration of each project?

An ERA Chair project can last for up to 5 years. This is an eligibility condition and proposals requiring projects lasting longer will be deemed ineligible. However, projects with a shorter duration are allowed.

16. What entities are eligible to submit a proposal for the HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-TALENTS-01-01: ERA CHAIRS action? If there is as a partner, are there any restrictions on its nature?

It is expected the coordinator to be a public or private university or a public or private non-profit research organisation. It is to be noted that "research organisation" refers to a non-profit making organisation which carries out scientific or technical research as its main objective. However, no proposal will be disqualified on grounds of non-eligibility for having an organisation of an incorrect nature.

Regarding potential partners, any legal entity established in a country other than the country of the coordinator can act as a partner.

17. What if the partner organization employing the ERA Chair holder is from an Associated Country or a Third Country?

As a rule, any legal entity, regardless of its place of establishment, including legal entities from non-associated third countries or international organisations (including international European research organisations) is eligible to participate, provided that the conditions laid down in the Horizon Europe Regulation have been met.

5- Questions related with the preparation of proposals

18. Is a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis mandatory in proposals for ERA Chair actions?

No, a SWOT analysis of the applicant's legal entity is not required. Applicants remain free to use this, or any other format they consider adequate, to provide context in proposals.

19. What is expected to be included in the proposal to facilitate structural change and achieve excellence at the institution applying for the grant?

Proposals should demonstrate how the presence of the ERA Chair holder and the proposed activities will upgrade from the current situation indicating any relevant investments of the coordinator in research projects, facilities and infrastructures and/or a better use of the installed research capacity (in particular of EU co-funded research infrastructures & facilities). The proposal should also indicate the support the ERA Chair holder will receive from the coordinator to take on her/his tasks and duties including, for example, access to research facilities, supervision of researchers, teaching duties (if any) and capacity to apply freely to national and international funding. If there is a partner institution, any support from this partner to the coordinator should be mentioned.

A further request is for the coordinator to ensure the sustainability of the ERA Chair research team after the end of the Horizon Europe funding. To this end, and in addition to any other measures indicated in proposals, it is mandatory the appointment of the leader of the ERA Chair research group on a permanent basis during the initial 3 years of the duration of the grant.

Finally, it is expected that the coordinator is in full compliance with ERA priorities ³, including the European Charter for Researchers & Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers⁴.

20. Can the action be used to fill vacancies already foreseen by institutions as part of their normal lifecycle?

This possibility is not excluded *per se* but proposals where the coordinator already employs the ERA Chair holder or where he/she has been offered an employment contract need to demonstrate that such recruitments take place in the context of the ERA Chair grant. If the vacancy opens at a later stage, then the ERA Chair holder is entitled to apply and, if selected through a transparent procedure, this is well in line with the aims of ERA Chairs actions.

21. Will the excellence of the partner institution (if there is one) be evaluated for ERA Chairs actions?

The WP does not request for a description of the possible partner and its quality will not be evaluated. However, the support to be provided by the partner institution to the coordinator will be considered in the context of the overall “package” of the ERA Chair holder. Such support is expected to occur mainly through secondments but other forms of collaboration are possible, provided their cost do not absorb a significant part of the grant.

22. The ERA Chair team what does it mean and how it should be recruited?

A substantial part of the grant is earmarked to hire a research team to work under the supervision of the ERA Chair holder. Once the grant agreement is signed, institutions will publish the vacancies to the research team.

³ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2012:0392:FIN>

⁴ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reco/2005/251/oj>

The size of the team, the experience of team members, and the duration of contracts should be adapted to the project needs. The selection of the personnel will be conducted by the international recruitment panel outlined in proposals and led by the ERA Chair holder. It is mandatory that at least 50% of the appointed ERA Chair team members do not have previous contractual links with the coordinator.

Is my organization obliged to have a “gender equality plan”?

As the ERA chair call will close in 2022, to be eligible, legal entities from Member States and Associated Countries that are public bodies, research organisations or higher education establishments (including private research organisations and higher education establishments) must have a gender equality plan. A self-declaration will be requested at proposal stage. This eligibility criterion does not apply to other categories of legal entities, such as private-for-profit organisations including SMEs, non-governmental or civil society organisations.

6- Financial issues

23. How can the funding in an ERA Chair grant be used?

The EU contribution under the ERA Chair grant will be dedicated to salaries of ERA Chair holders and their team and costs related with the implementation of the work plan. The grant will also provide a contribution towards measures aimed at facilitating structural changes in the institution (e.g. costs for trainings, meetings, publications and managing IPR). Research costs are eligible up to 10% of the maximum EU contribution. Acquisition of equipment should be linked with the work of the ERA Chair research team and evaluators should find in the proposal enough information to establish this connection

24. In ERA Chair grants, will hiring PhD students be eligible even if they are not considered as “permanent” staff?

Participation of PhD students on the ERA Chairs actions is possible and desirable. Costs of students that work for the beneficiary can be accepted, if the agreement is work-oriented (not training-oriented: i.e. not aimed at helping the student to acquire professional skills). PhD agreements will be considered work-oriented. However, time for training, if any, may NOT be charged to the action.

Fellowships/scholarships/stipends — Can be charged to the action (as personnel costs), if they fulfil the conditions set out in Article 6.1 and 6.2.A.2 of the AGA, and in particular:

- the remuneration complies with the application national law on taxes, labour and social security
- the assignment of tasks respects the laws in force in the country of the beneficiary
- the students have the necessary qualifications to carry out the tasks allocated to them under the action.

25. What categories of costs cannot be funded under topic HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-TALENTS-01-01: ERA CHAIRS. Do these restrictions also concern research costs?

The Work Programme does not specifically exclude any category of costs and therefore all types of costs allowed for a Coordination and Support Action are eligible in the ERA Chairs topic. Those include research costs up to 10% of the EU grant but given the objectives of the action, most costs are expected to be linked to personnel. Small equipment will be eligible as part of research costs and if it constitutes only a minor part of the EU funding requested and are necessary to fulfil the action's specific scope and objective.

26. How to claim salary costs in case of secondment of the ERA Chair holder from the partner institution to the coordinator?

It is the beneficiary/third party who employs the person who has to declare its costs (NOT the beneficiary/third party to whom the person has been seconded). The costs declared must be supported by reliable time records of the number of hours the person worked for the action. Those time records must be produced under the responsibility of the beneficiary/third party to whom the person is seconded.

Normally, secondments should be formalized via a secondment agreement. The secondment agreement has to detail the conditions of secondment (*tasks, payment (or not) from one entity to the other, duration of the secondment, location, etc.*).

27. Will a partner organization from an Associated Country or a Third Country be allowed to claim costs, for example, during secondment periods of the ERA Chair holder?

For Associated Countries there is no difference in treatment related to MS, in particular, costs will be eligible as if for a partner within the EU. For Third Countries, low- and middle-income countries (See the Horizon Europe Programme Guide for a complete list of these countries) can also claim such costs. Legal entities which are established in countries not in those lists will be eligible to claim costs if their participation is considered essential for implementing the action by the granting authority.

28. Are recruitment costs for the selection and hiring of the ERA Chair and his/her research team eligible under the grant?

The procedure to identify and select the prospective ERA Chair holder shall be made prior to the submission of the proposal and thus related costs will not be eligible. This does not preclude claims of relocation costs or other contractual advantages offered to the ERA Chair holder during the execution of the project. In addition, recruitment costs for the ERA Chair research team are eligible as specified in the Work Programme.

29. What is the reimbursement rate for a HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-TALENTS-01-01: ERA Chairs project?

Participants are entitled to claim direct eligible costs in full (reimbursement rate of 100%) and this amount is topped up by an additional flat rate of 25% of direct costs to cover for the indirect costs (overheads).