

FAQ

CORE 2022 CALL

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Note

Please carefully read our **updated programme description and application guidelines**. If you need additional support or if you require further explanations while preparing your application please contact the FNR staff.

Useful links

- The FNR has **streamlined the financial regulations for applicants and beneficiaries for all FNR funding schemes in one document**. The details on the eligibility of costs are available in the [Financial Regulations](#) (relating to the methods of awarding grants from the National Research Fund (FNR)) applicable as of 1 January 2022.
- Call relevant information is available on the [CORE website](#)
- [FNR requirements for principal investigators and supervisors](#) of FNR-funded projects ().
- Call relevant documents as well as reporting and peer review documents can be downloaded from our [FNR Download Center](#)
- FNR webinar “[Evolution of FNR funding policies in 2021](#)” of 13th January 2021 provides latest information on changes to FNR funding policies, affecting most of FNR’s programmes.

1. Proposals

1.1. The link to the revised [National Research Priorities](#)

The FNR implements the “National Research and Innovation Strategy for Luxembourg” as retained by the Government on 20th December 2019, by integrating the revised National Research Priorities for Luxembourg in the CORE Call. Applications not complying to the revised National Research Priorities for Luxembourg will not be eligible.

1.2. Is it better to submit a small project or a large project?

In general the FNR believes that a project should have a well-defined hypothesis and clearly defined research objectives. The FNR is looking for the scientific merit of the proposal but also the socio-economic impact which in first instance (very important) involves the training of people (i.e. PhDs) and the strengthening of the research team itself (and subsequently the institutions). In view of providing early career researchers with an adequate framework for first project applications, the FNR has developed a ‘Junior Track’ within CORE. Specific requirements for CORE Junior applicants apply.

1.3. Resubmissions

The FNR allows only **one** resubmission for each application. Projects which have been submitted to FNR in previous calls and have not been retained for funding may be resubmitted **once** and only after the project has undergone substantial revision. It is absolutely necessary to take the previous reviews and panel conclusion into consideration. The FNR reserves the right to exclude projects which have not undergone substantial changes in the resubmitted application. Disguised resubmissions can be rejected as well.

1.4. Do resubmitted proposals have better chances of getting funded?

No. Resubmitting a project is not a guarantee of getting funded. The proposals need special care in view of updating the current state of art as things change over the years. Furthermore, the FNR advises you to respect the comments of the peers in this new proposal (you will need to comment this issue anyway in the proposal form). Of course, the proposal will undergo the whole evaluation procedure again just like any other proposal.

2. Principle Investigator (PI)

2.1. May a Principle Investigator (PI) submit more than one proposal?

The answer is twofold depending on the nature of the CORE project.

The answer is ‘NO’ for young PIs who choose to submit under CORE Junior track. They may only submit one proposal per call.

The answer is ‘YES’ for PIs who choose to submit under the regular CORE track. Up to two proposals may be submitted per principal investigator.

As a general rule: It is possible to submit proposals every year regardless of whether a previous proposal has been accepted or not.

2.2. What status does the PI/Co-PI need to have?

The PI must hold a PhD degree at the CORE/CORE Junior submission deadline. As a general rule, a PI applying for research grants must be employed (full or part-time) at latest at project start at a FNR beneficiary organisation in Luxembourg for the full duration of the project (PIs entering retirement before the end of the project are therefore not eligible). The FNR allows more than one PI on CORE project grants. To nominate a Co-PI out of the applicant team is the decision of the applicants, and should only be done if it reflects the needs of the proposed research project. The PI and Co-PI should have complementary expertise and must be from different research units (within the same or different FNR-eligible Luxembourg-based institutions, i.e. contracting partners).

The FNR has [specific requirements for principal investigators and supervisors](#) which apply to both PI and Co-PI.

2.3. Can there be two PIs on a project?

No. One PI has the lead of the project and manages its implementation. It is however possible to associate a Co-PI to the project.

2.4. If a PI submits 2 projects as PI, can she/he be a Co-PI on additional projects?

Up to two project proposals may be submitted per PI (as PI or Co-PI or as a mix of both).

Only **one application** is allowed for CORE junior track applicants. A CORE junior PI cannot be a Co-PI on another project. No Co-PIs are allowed on CORE junior projects).

2.5. How much time does the PI need to spend on the project?

The FNR has not set a minimum requirement concerning the amount of time a PI needs to spend on the project. The PI leads the project and manages its implementation. The PI therefore plays the key role in the success of a project and the PI's suitability to run a project (experience and credentials) is an important element of the evaluation of the project proposal.

Special rules apply for CORE Junior applications.

2.6. May I submit a proposal as a researcher abroad?

Yes. The FNR maintains that, at the start of the project, the PI must be under working contract with the public research institution in Luxembourg (beneficiary institution) for the full duration of the project.

3. CORE Junior

3.1. May a junior investigator/post-doc submit a project?

Yes. If the beneficiary institution permits the person to submit a project.

In order to encourage young or early career stage researchers to submit research projects, the FNR has implemented the 'CORE Junior Track'. Details about the 'CORE Junior Track' can be found in the application guidelines.

3.2. Is CORE junior limited to R2¹ researchers?

The CORE junior track is offered as entry point for starting PIs with limited track record and limited project management experience, to gain their first own project grant. These starting PIs usually are at R2 career stage.

3.3. Do R2 researchers have to submit in the CORE junior track?

No. The CORE junior track is offered as an option to encourage junior PIs to enter into competition for their first project grant. Applicants are however free to apply under the CORE junior track or the CORE regular track.

3.4. Are senior researchers new in Luxembourg expected to submit a CORE junior?

No, the CORE junior track is targeting researchers at the R2 career stage (recognised researcher – PhD holders or equivalent who are not yet fully independent).

3.5. Is there a limitation in N years after PhD for applying to CORE junior?

No. There is no limitation in years after PhD. This allows applicants with non-linear careers or career breaks to apply for a project grant as first-time PI.

For CORE junior applicants with a higher number of years after PhD, it is however recommended to explain their motivation for choosing the CORE junior track in the narrative CV. This prevents reviewers and panel members from having to guess why a proposal was submitted in the junior track and not in the regular track

3.6. How will the “junior” aspect be taken into consideration in the evaluation?

Reviewers are requested to modulate their evaluation against the level of experience of the junior PI (=> relates also to the benefit of narrative CVs to reflect achievements of less experienced researchers). If a proposal is marked as CORE junior, this signals to reviewers that they should assess the track record of the PI against the expectation of a researcher at R2 career stage.

3.7. Can CORE junior be used for CORE international?

No, the junior PI cannot submit a proposal in the frame of international collaborations (CORE international).

3.8. Does the CORE Junior still aim to “prove independence from the supervisor”?

Yes, the idea is still for applicants to use the CORE Junior to develop their own independent research line, supporting them to transition from R2 career stage to R3 career stage. It is equally understood that, in order to build up a reputation in a field, they require support. How the applicant is embedded in the host group (and thus supported to be independent) is therefore part of the evaluation.

¹ <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/europe/career-development/training-researchers/research-profiles-descriptors>

3.9. What role does career development play in the evaluation of a CORE junior proposal?

It is now made clear that CORE junior is primarily a project-funding grant. The selection criterion on “contribution to the advancement of the junior PI’s career” has been removed.

The junior PI is free to mention any motivations with re. to career development in the new narrative CV. But the value of the project for career development is no longer part of the assessment.

In more general terms, it is understood that gaining a first project grant and leading for the first time a project as independent PI is in fact in itself the best career promoting element for a future career in research or elsewhere.

3.10. Are CORE junior proposals treated separately in the evaluation process?

No. The CORE junior proposals will be treated in the same panels than the regular CORE proposals and they will be ranked along with the regular CORE proposals.

3.11. Can there be a PhD position in a CORE junior proposal?

PhD supervision is not excluded per se. However, the junior PI must fulfil the FNR requirements for PIs and Supervisors. In particular, they must have adequate supervision rights, i.e. they have been formally entrusted by the degree awarding institution with the supervision of PhD candidates.

As for R2 researchers this is not very common, it is not expected to see many PhDs in CORE junior projects.

3.12. The CORE PI is hesitating between the CORE junior track and the regular CORE track. Are there higher chances of being successful in the CORE junior track?

There is no straight answer to this question.

The proposals in the CORE junior and the regular CORE track are evaluated against the same selection criteria. On the one hand, CORE junior proposals come with certain limitations in resources, staff and budget, which may limit the ambition and impact of the project.

On the other hand, reviewers are invited to look more carefully at the level of experience and the scientific achievements of the junior PI in their assessment of the quality, ambition and feasibility of the junior PI’s proposal.

It is up to the PI to weigh the different aspects against his/her profile/project and to decide in which track to submit the proposal.

3.13. Can a CORE junior - R2 researcher with no supervision rights - have a PhD on the project? If not, can the mentor or a group member be the PhD supervisor?

No. PhD supervision cannot be delegated to the mentor or another team member.

FNR requirements for PIs and Supervisors apply. In particular, they must have adequate supervision rights conferred by the degree-awarding institution. Each university have their own rules and criteria for awarding supervision rights. At UL, this would be the ADR, but at other

Universities rules may differ. Each applicant has to check whether he/she is complying to the FNR requirements for PIs and supervisors.

3.14. For CORE junior, temporary contracts (CDD) are limited to 3 years or 5 years max. How can this be handled if an applicant is already doing a 2nd post doc or a 1st post doc of 3 years in the institution?

The working contract limitations might allow for a shorter project only. CORE projects can have a duration of 2-3 years. CORE (junior) PIs must have an employment contract for the full duration of their CORE project.

3.15. Are there any limitations in a CORE junior compared to the regular CORE?

For a CORE Junior, the ambition/size of the project should be tailored to the level of experience of the junior PI. The total FTEs on a CORE Junior project are limited to 2 (including the Junior PI). Also, projects requiring the management of a large consortium of human resources and collaborations should be avoided. It is understood that the PIs will work on their CORE junior project for a large percentage of their time.

Regarding budget, limitations in a CORE junior apply to the budgets for travelling and subcontracting, both limited to € 25.000².

In reverse, applicants in the CORE junior track may optionally make use of mentorship by an external mentor.

3.16. Does a junior PI have to submit under the ‘CORE Junior Track’?

No. It is up to the applicant to select if the proposal should be submitted under the CORE Junior Track or under the regular CORE track.

3.17. Can a CORE Junior project be of lower scientific quality compared to the regular CORE projects?

No. There will be no compromises on the scientific quality. During the evaluation, the track record and the experience of the CORE Junior PI will be taken into account.

3.18. Can a CORE Junior PI be listed on other projects?

Yes. The CORE Junior PI can be listed on other projects, but not as PI in FNR funded projects of course.

3.19. Does it make sense to have a second CORE Junior project after a first one has been successfully completed?

Not really. The FNR expects that the PI has gained sufficient experience after having successfully completed the CORE Junior project. He/she could then apply for a regular CORE project.

² The details on the eligibility of costs are available in the [Financial Regulations](#) (relating to the methods of awarding grants from the National Research Fund (FNR)) applicable as of 1 January 2022.

3.20. Is it possible to hire a full-time person on a CORE Junior project?

Yes. The total working time to be covered by the young PI and other staff may not exceed 2 full-time-equivalents (including the PI's own contribution).

3.21. Are there any particularities about the external mentor abroad?

Yes. The mentor can neither be a workpackage leader nor the PhD supervisor if there is a PhD student on the project.

3.22. Is there a limitation on human resources in CORE Junior projects?

Yes, for CORE Junior projects human resources are limited to max. 2 FTE (including the PI's own contribution as well as FNR funded and not FNR funded staff). For a PhD candidate, 36 person months are counted (i.e. the additional up to 12 person months for the 4th year's PhD extension are not counted to the 2 FTE limit). Any advisory or mentorship activities should not be counted to the 2 FTE limit either.

4. PhDs on the Project

4.1. Does the FNR have a rule of a minimum or a maximum number of PhD students and/or Postdocs on a CORE project?

No.

4.2. How should the PhD supervision be organised?

The FNR expects the PI of the project to be the PhD supervisor and to be hosted at the same institution. The FNR has [specific requirements for principal investigators and supervisors](#) which apply to both PI and Co-PI. In case the PhD supervisor is based in Luxembourg and the degree awarding institution is a university abroad, the university rules for external supervisors and the practical arrangements with the degree awarding institution need to be described in the project proposal and are subject to evaluation by the FNR.

FNR-funded PhDs are expected to be offered a research and training environment in accordance with the principles enounced in the [National Quality Framework for Doctoral Training](#) (NQFDT).

5. Other Staff on the Project

5.1. Can new staff be funded in the CORE programme (i.e. research scientists, Postdocs, technicians, etc.)?

Yes. New and existing research staff can be funded through a CORE project. The FNR recommends that a large majority of the staff should be in place at the beginning of the project. It is advised to indicate potential candidates in the proposal and/or the means employed to recruit new staff of appropriate quality and in sufficient time for the project start.

5.2. Is it possible to submit a project where at project start 50% of the required staff is not yet in place?

Yes. But it is strongly recommended to start the recruitment process a.s.a.p. The FNR might reject a project where a large part of the workforce is not in place and brings about a delay in the project start.

5.3. Does the FNR want to have information on the profiles of future PhD students?

Yes. Include the profile description for the PhD positions, the supervision set-up and the degree awarding institution.

5.4. When working in a team: Is it necessary to document the experience of every person involved (CVs)?

No. The FNR has introduced the **narrative-style CV** (“**Individual Narrative Profile**”) in all its funding programmes, which in conjunction with an updated ORCID profile, allows the full picture of a researcher to be evaluated (PI and, if applicable, the co-PI). Using this [Narrative Profile template](#) is mandatory, and applications not using it will be considered ineligible for evaluation.

5.5. What is the meaning of full-time-equivalent (FTE)?

A full time equivalent (FTE) of 1 means that a person is working full-time on the project. A FTE of 0,5 shows that the person is working half-time on the project.

6. Partners on the Project

6.1. Is the mentor (under the CORE Junior Track) a ‘non-contracting partner’?

No. According to the CORE guidelines, costs associated with mentoring should be indicated in the budget heading ‘Subcontracting’.

The restrictions on IP and publication rights for subcontractors do not apply to the mentor.

6.2. Is it required to include the non-contracting partners in the IPR/consortium agreement once the project is retained for funding?

Yes. The IPR/consortium agreement must include all the partners of the project. The applicant should ask his/her administration for internal guidelines and assistance.

6.3. Are support letters needed at submission stage?

No. Support letters are not required. They will be taken out by the FNR if submitted.

For CORE Junior applications: A signed letter by the chosen mentor (if applicable), needs to be submitted to the FNR, but only after a positive funding decision and before the signature of the FNR convention (not at application stage!)

6.4. Is it required that the third party services (subcontracting) sign the submission documents?

No.

6.5. Is industry participation a 'must'?

No. The FNR welcomes however collaborations with the private and public sector within and outside Luxembourg.

Luxembourg companies may receive funding by the Ministry of Economy (MECE) for research and development projects (active participation in research activities are a must) through a specific programme. The FNR and Luxinnovation/MECE aim at synchronising their funding decisions. Please contact the FNR upfront to be able to assist you.

7. Budget of the Project

7.1. Where to find the details on the FNR financial regulations for FNR funded projects?

The details on the eligibility of costs are available in the [Financial Regulations](#) (relating to the methods of awarding grants from the National Research Fund (FNR)) applicable as of 1 January 2022.

7.2. How much 'overhead costs' will be funded by the FNR?

The FNR applies the Full Cost with Flat rate model (FCF), where direct costs are reimbursed on the basis of the actual incurred (real) costs and overheads are reimbursed on the basis of a flat-rate (up to 25% of direct costs minus subcontracting). The FNR provides a standard flat rate for overhead costs of up to 25% of the direct cost (not including subcontracting) for all newly funded projects. Overheads cannot be claimed by public administrations.

7.3. Is there a limit for subcontracting costs?

Yes. They are limited to a maximum of 25% of the FNR requested funding (without overhead costs).

7.4. Is there a need to provide co-funding to the project?

No. A project can be funded up to 100% by the FNR provided that the costs are eligible.

7.5. Are travel costs for non-contracting partners eligible project costs?

Yes. But solely travel costs for attending meetings and conferences in Luxembourg within the project are covered.

7.6. Is it required to indicate the external financial contribution, even if some sources of funds are not yet attributed?

Yes. Please indicate if this is planned, and if so, if it is already approved.

7.7. Is top-up funding over the project an eligible project cost if the person receives a grant (e.g. AFR, other funding)?

No. Top-up funding will not be covered by the project.

7.8. Are ‘overhead costs’ on subcontracting eligible costs?

No. Lump sum calculations for overhead costs may not be applied to subcontracting costs.

7.9. Does the PI have to pay for having patented his/her findings within a project funded by FNR?

No. Neither the PI nor the public research institution will have to reimburse the FNR for patents or licenses.

7.10. Does the FNR have a limit for PhD funding when the salary is covered by the CORE project?

No. There is no such limit. The FNR pays the salaries for PhDs which will be paid by the institutions (full-cost basis).

7.11. Is it possible to combine AFR and FNR budgets to pay one PhD student?

No. The applicant/host institution must make a choice: either AFR or FNR project budget (CORE).

7.12. Can budgets for consumables be spent in partner institutions outside Luxembourg?

No.

7.12. Are publication costs eligible?

Open Access fees and other fees (e.g. page charges) related to scientific articles are no longer eligible for funding as part of FNR funded projects. Article processing charges (APCs) of Open Access publications (scientific articles or monographs) can only be refunded through the FNR’s “Open Access Fund”, and if fulfilling the FNR requirements. See the [Open Access webpage](#) for more information. The FNR **requires** that all scientific articles related to FNR-(co)funded projects are published in Open Access and that scientific monographs are published in Open Access whenever possible.

8. Submission Process

8.1. Is it allowed to submit a proposal without using the FNR online grant submission system?

No. All CORE applications have to be submitted through the FNR Online Grant Submission System.

8.2. Is the 72.000 characters limitation of the CORE project description counted with or without spaces?

The 72.000 characters are counted including spaces (indicated in Count Anything as Chars) and including the headings.

9. Review Process by the FNR

9.1. How does the FNR choose its reviewers?

The FNR chooses its reviewers within the international research community. The selection is done in accordance with international standards (see also the '[Peer Review Guidelines](#)'). The names of the individual reviewers will not be communicated to the applicants.

9.2. Can the PI indicate names of reviewers which he/she does not want the FNR to be contacted?

Yes. The applicant has the possibility to send an email to the FNR with a list of maximum 3 experts who should not be contacted as reviewers for the specific project to submission@fnr.lu before the submission deadline. The email has to explain why this/these expert(s) should not be contacted. The FNR however reserves the right to make the final selection of reviewers.

10. International Co-Funding within CORE (CORE international)

10.1. How is the review process for projects submitted under the international co-funding scheme?

All "CORE international" proposals will be evaluated within the normal CORE selection process, together with the other submitted proposals.

10.2. Are the funding decisions for the bilateral and trilateral projects communicated at the same time?

No. The result of the FNR evaluation will be communicated to the partner funding agency for decision. This will lead to a delay of several weeks or even several months in the communication of the funding decision for bilateral projects with respect to unilateral projects. This is an agreed-upon procedure between the Lead Agency funding agencies.

10.3. Can a CORE Junior PI apply with CORE international?

No.

11. Extension (up to 12 months) for PhD Candidates, Conferences and Publications – For funded projects

11.1. Can the PhD candidate make a conference presentation during the extension period, if there are still travel allowances, initially foreseen for conference participation, available?

Yes. If the travel allowances are not entirely used from the initial budget.

11.2. Are personnel and overhead costs relating to the publications and to the organisation of international conferences eligible during the extension period?

Yes. All costs foreseen in the initial budget are eligible.

11.3. Personnel and overhead cost foreseen for the writing of the final report are they still eligible during the extension period which means after the end of the project?

No. The final report has to be written during the three months following the end date of the project. This date (end of project + 3 months) is indicated as closing date for the cost coverage of the project.