



Unite! Seed Fund Initiative

Research & PhD in Unite! Focus Areas

Call Spring 2025

Objectives of the Initiative

The Unite! Seed Fund is envisioned to provide financial support to innovative, co-creative and collaborative ideas in **teaching and learning, scientific research, and student activities** across the [Unite! alliance](#). The Seed Fund intends to support the exploration and development of attractive and diverse activities and projects, to help secure either the additional funds for a project or to conduct cooperation on joint, ambitious, and innovative ideas within the alliance.

Funding Line: “Unite! Seed Fund for Research and PhD in Unite! Focus Areas” (Spring 2025)

Funding initiative for promoting innovation and collaboration in Research and PhD in Unite! in the following focus areas:

- **Artificial Intelligence**
- **Industry 4.0**
- **Energy**
- **Entrepreneurship**
- **Sustainable Cities and Water¹**
- **Engineering Biology²**
- **Space**
- **Cybersecurity**

The Unite! university alliance invites **researchers and research units from at least 3 member universities** to submit proposals of collaborative projects. The funding is open to subjects and topics related to the focus areas mentioned above.

Award Information and Timeline: Basic Data

Seed Fund programme line:	Research & PhD in Unite! Focus Areas
Maximum budget for each proposal belonging to the programme option “Exploring”	Up to €10,000
Maximum budget for each proposal belonging to the programme option “Developing”:	
a) 3 participating universities	a) Up to €20,000
b) 4 participating universities	b) Up to €27,500
c) 5 participating universities	c) Up to €35,000
d) 6 participating universities	d) Up to €44,000
e) 7 participating universities	e) Up to €54,000
f) 8 participating universities	f) Up to €65,000
g) 9 participating universities	g) Up to €80,000
Deadline for proposals:	20 March 2025
Announcement of results:	Early June 2025
Funding period for this call:	October 2025 – December 2026

¹ incl. Resilient Cities and Climate Change.

² incl. Biotechnology.



Objectives and Purpose

- Encourage Unite! members to **jointly seize new opportunities** in research and PhD education
- **Stimulate academic collaboration** from the bottom up (in the Unite! focus areas)
- Support collaborative initiatives financially for a **fixed time** (from the Seed Fund)
- Enable Unite! members to develop **collaborative follow-up activities that intend to obtain significant funding from other major sources** (e.g., Horizon Europe, Erasmus+ or other EU and national sources), thus leveraging the seed funding.

Essentially, the seed fund intends to support the formation of **new research collaborations** and/or to further develop already active communities across **Unite! members**, specifically in the Unite! focus areas.

Potential Outputs

Programme Option “Exploring”:

- Networking and establishing connections for research collaborations (e.g. joint doctorates, joint doctoral workshops, etc.)
- Well-defined collaboration idea with outline for next steps
- Carry out other supplemental research activities within an existing research project that otherwise could not be realised due to budget limitations.
- Carry out early-stage research or exploratory studies intended to obtain more significant funding from major sources, etc.

Programme Option “Developing”:

- Developing joint research proposals (for specific funding schemes, e.g., MSCA doctoral networks etc.)
- Providing joint/shared offers specifically for PhD candidates or post-Docs (for the purpose of research, soft skills, career development, etc.)
- Establishing research or PhD communities with defined structures (such as research clusters or graduate schools)
- Creating a comprehensive plan to pursue external funding with identified opportunities
- Engaging in collaborative activities, such as the dissemination of research results to broader audiences, the organisation of workshops or research meetings
- Conducting field research (quantitative or qualitative) within the scope of an existing larger research project
- Carrying out a small research project within the broader scope of the aforementioned focus areas, etc.

Budgetary Guidance

Eligible costs that can be funded:

- Personnel costs* should be included with clear justification (e.g., conceptualising/preparatory work, accrediting, proposal writing, setting up conditions)
- Travel expenses (sustainable modes of travel preferred; Erasmus+ mobility schemes should be used wherever possible)
 - Travel costs must be covered (and applied for) by the universities sending students/staff to another university. The host university cannot pay travel costs of visiting students and staff.
- Other costs that can be funded include material resources, research consumables, on-site/blended workshops, external service providers (e.g., moderators, language services).
 - If you intend to purchase large technical equipment or replace standard equipment, please discuss with your Unite! [Key Liaison Officer](#) whether your university’s regulations allow this.



- In general, overhead costs cannot be included in the budget plan. In case this poses problems as to the internal regulations of your institution, please contact your Unite! Key Laison Officer ([KLO](#)) as well as the Unite! Seed Fund management at seedfund@unite-university.eu.

***The Seed Fund does not cover PhD or Post-doc stipends/grants for individuals.**

The proposal must make clear in which way the funded activities are additional to ongoing activities and support the Unite! objectives as specified in the [Unite! mission statement](#).

Requirements and Deliverables

- Applications must include academic staff or teachers or teaching units from **at least three full Unite! member universities**. Partners beyond Unite! can be included, but not as beneficiaries.
- Funds are expected to be managed through local coordinators within the project.
- If beneficial for the project, the Unite! **Metacampus should be used as part of the project**, and its intended use should be specified in the Seed Fund proposal. Metacampus (as part of the Unite! digital campus) is the central [learning management platform](#) for all Unite! members and can be used e.g. for trainings, workshops, teaching, and lectures. For any questions, please contact the Metacampus support team (metacampus@unite-university.eu).
- Applications must include letters of support issued by the dean of studies of the participating departments of the universities.
- For the establishment of new study programmes: Distinction from existing study programmes, presentation of the complementary added value as well as a declaration that sufficient personnel and material resources are available for the implementation and execution of the new study programme.
- A written report to the Unite! Secretariat on the progress and results of the project is due two months after the project ends (28 February 2027 at the latest).
- **Only a max. of 50% of the funding can be allocated to one partner in the project.**

Finding International Partners for Seed Fund Proposals

- A **virtual matchmaking event** will be organised with the aim of bringing into contact potential collaboration partners from the Unite! universities. Participation is recommended but not mandatory.

Date and time:	Friday, 14 February 2025, 13:00 – 15:00 CET
Registration:	https://eveeno.com/uniteseedfundmatchmakingresearch2025
Deadline for registration:	Tuesday, 11 February 2025
Explication	It is possible to register either as a 'coordinator' (with a project idea) or as a 'partner' (who is looking for a coordinator). During the virtual meeting, there will be one breakout room per project idea, with the coordinator leading/moderating the discussion. The full list of project ideas will be shared with all registered participants after 11 February 2025.



Evaluation Criteria

- 1) The **overall quality** of the application, including:
 - Adequate inclusion of relevant academic expertise of the Unite! alliance
 - Realistic work plan and clear deliverables
 - Adequacy of the funding requested
- 2) The **sustainability and long-term perspective** of the proposal, including:
 - Credible commitment to sustained collaborative activities within Unite!
 - Clear potential for joint activities to be made permanent or scaled up
- 3) The potential **impact** of the proposal, including:
 - Expected added value for and impact on scientific research and PhD education
 - Expectation value (likelihood and potential benefit) of successful follow-up funding proposals and other joint activities (high-risk/high-gain proposals are possible)
 - If applicable: Potential for outreach and external dissemination of Unite!

Application Procedure

- Applications can be submitted **until 20 March 2025** via email to: seedfund@unite-university.eu
- It is strongly recommended to contact your university's [Key Liaison Officer](#) for application guidance. In case you are affiliated with [ULisboa](#), contacting your Key Liaison Officer is mandatory. General inquiries can also be emailed to: seedfund@unite-university.eu
- It is strongly recommended that applications be coordinated in advance with the central administration units of the respective universities.
- **Eligible to apply:**
 - **Doctoral Researchers** (may need local coordinator who can receive funds)
 - **Early-Career Researchers** (e.g., Post-docs, Ad-hoc lecturer/professor etc.)
 - **Research Units** (i.e., Doctoral Schools/programmes, Research centres, PhD communities etc.)
 - **Tenured Researchers** (e.g., Professors, Associate Professors etc.)
- The evaluation of applications will be carried out by the Unite! Academic Forum (UAF), and selection decisions will be confirmed by the Unite! Steering Committee. Results are **expected by early June 2025**.
- **The complete application packet includes four documents:**
 - 1) **Project outline** (no more than 1000 words, signatures can be on additional sheet) to be submitted as PDF, which shows how the proposed objectives will be achieved and the funding criteria fulfilled.
 - 2) The **budget allocation** (Excel sheet)
 - 3) **Eligibility checklist** (Excel sheet)
 - 4) **Letter of support** issued by the dean of studies of the participating departments of the universities. If you are affiliated with [ULisboa](#), it is mandatory for you to contact your [Key Liaison Officer](#) for guidance as to the letter of support.
 - Only for new study programmes: a declaration that sufficient personnel and material resources are available for the implementation and execution of the new study program.