**Horizon Europe Connect Fund**New seed funding opportunity for European Partnerships and Networks

**Summary**

* The fund aims to support the development of high-quality proposals for Horizon Europe by facilitating early partner identification and capability mapping, particularly for UK, EU, or Horizon Europe Associate Country organisations. It also supports Early Career Researchers in developing European networks for future Horizon Europe proposals.
* Open to all three pillars of Horizon Europe, the fund targets senior investigators and early career researchers. Applications will be assessed based on the importance, creativity, and potential impact of the proposed research/workshop/staff exchange, its alignment with Horizon Europe calls, and the wider institutional benefits it brings.

**Background**Horizon Europe is the largest transnational research and innovation funding programme in the world. It runs from 2021 to 2027 and involves more than 40 countries working in areas from climate change and health to artificial intelligence and quantum, with a budget of over €95bn (2021–2027, excluding contributions from Associate Countries).

The UK has now fully associated to the programme and will contribute an average of €2.43bn annually for the remainder of the programme (2024-2027). Imperial was one of the top ranked institutions for research funding awards under Horizon 2020, the predecessor programme to Horizon Europe which ran from 2014 to 2020, with grants under-pinning critical discovery science and technology innovation and impact across all four faculties.

**Aim of the fund**

* Support the development of high-quality proposals to Horizon Europe;
* Facilitate the early identification of partners and capability-mapping to ensure ideas align and that consortia are able to collectively respond to the themes set out in Horizon Europe Work Programme documents when calls emerge;
* Support Early Career Researchers (ECRs) to develop European networks with a view to developing Horizon Europe proposals in the medium to long-term.

Typical awards are expected to be in £2000-£6000 range. Budget requests should not exceed £10,000.

There are two streams available:

1. Senior Investigator Awards
2. Early Career Research Awards

Up to 50% of the Horizon Europe Connect Fund will be allocated to Early Career Researcher (ECR) proposals. This allocation is designed to support the development of new generations of research leaders by providing them with the resources and opportunities needed to build European networks.

**Scope and use of funds**

The funding can be used for:

* Costs of meetings or visits for UK, EU or eligible Horizon Europe participant organisations involved in proposal development;
* Outward visits for College Academics or Research Staff to a partner institution to develop consortia aimed at Horizon Europe funding;
* Inward visits for partner institution Academics or Research Staff to Imperial to develop consortia aimed at Horizon Europe funding.
* Funding for proposal development including contributions towards support services such as proposal writing;
* Travel and subsistence, including costs for participating in information days, programme boards, communities of practice and brokerage events directly related to Horizon Europe objectives;
* Funding to support capability-mapping that with the aim of targeting Horizon Europe programmes (e.g buyouts of a PhD student or Post-doc time);
* Networking events such as workshops, training academies and seminars to bring together ECR researcher communities to foster new links or strengthen existing European collaborations.

**Eligibility**

The call is open to all three pillars of Horizon Europe.

Horizon Europe is built around three main pillars – excellent science (Pillar 1), global challenges and industrial competitiveness (Pillar 2), and innovative Europe (Pillar 3). Horizon’s Pillar 2 has the largest budget, and supports research that is aimed at tackling some of the biggest problems facing society, from improving people’s health to tackling climate change.

The call is open to support collaboration with EU 27 member states and other [countries eligible to participate in Horizon Europe](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation_horizon-euratom_en.pdf)

* most least developed and low- to middle-income countries are automatically eligible and related programmes include the [EU-Africa cooperation](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-07/eu-au-ri-cooperation-he-africa-initiative-2.pdf) initiative with a total budget of approximately €300 million.
* New-Zealand is applicable for Pillar II 'Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness' as from the Work Programmes 2023 onwards.
* It has [recently been agreed](https://www.researchprofessionalnews.com/rr-news-europe-horizon-2020-2023-11-breaking-trudeau-says-canada-is-joining-horizon-europe/) that Canadian researchers and academic institutions, as well as corporate R&D labs, will be able to participate in Pillar II of Horizon Europe.

Early Career Research (ECR) are defined as independent fellows or newly appointed lecturers who are within 2-7 years of experience since completion of PhD, excluding any career break, for example due to family care, health reasons, or reasons related to COVID-19 such as home schooling or increased teaching load.

A Senior Investigator is defined as a PI who does not fit into the ECR definition and is a member of staff with a permanent academic contract.

**Applications will be assessed on the following criteria:**

1. Importance, creativity, and potential impact of the research/workshop/staff exchange and/or new partnership, emphasisng the synergy between research groups at Imperial and international partners;
2. The fit to identified Horizon Europe call or work programme and potential for the collaboration to lead to successful joint grant application(s);
3. Wider institutional benefits (to other departments, faculties, centres or students and staff etc) the partnership/consortia will bring.

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| **Area** | **Fundable (Y/N)** |
| Proposal Development Costs (e.g grant development writer) | Y |
| Travel | Y |
| Accommodation | Y |
| Subsistence | Y |
| Research strategy development support costs (e.g student bursaries/ buy-out of PhD or post-doc time ) | Y |
| Networking events such as workshops and seminars | Y |
|  |  |
| Project-related equipment | N |
| Research Consumables | N |
| Bench fees | N |
| Indirect and estate costs | N |
| Salary costs (staff) | N |

Award activity and use of funds must conclude with an interim report by the deadline of the Horizon Europe call being applied to. Awards will be required to provide further reporting on their award, including in relation to the outcome of their application to Horizon Europe.

**Timescales**

The funding has to be spent within 8 months of award.

The Horizon Europe Connect Fund is an open call without a specific deadline. Applications will be reviewed on a monthly basis, with the review process commencing on the first Monday of each month. Applicants are encouraged to submit their proposals at any time, and they will be considered during the next available review cycle.

**Horizon Europe Connect Fund**

**Application Form**

Please complete the following form and return to [international.relations@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:international.relations@imperial.ac.uk)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Project Details** | |
| **Early Career Researcher or Senior Investigator stream** |  |
| **Project Lead** |  |
| **Named researchers** |  |
| **Project Partners (institution and country)** |  |

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| **Project overview (200 words)**  *Lay summary of the application and how it will contribute to the aims of the fund.* |
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| **Importance, creativity, and potential impact of the research/workshop/staff exchange and/or new partnership**  *Briefly describe the project/activity and its benefits, emphasising the synergy between research groups at Imperial and international partners*  **(300 words)** |
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| **The fit to the identified Horizon Europe call or work programme**  Demonstrate the potential for the project/activity to lead to successful joint grant application(s) and identify target Horizon Europe schemes; **(300 words)** |
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| **Institutional benefits**  Outline wider institutional benefits (to other departments, faculties, centres or students and staff etc) the partnership/consortia will bring **(300 words)** |
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**Funding requested**

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| --- | --- |
| **Total Amount in £GBP** |  |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Item** | **Details and Justification** | **Cost** | **Total (GBP)** |
| Workshops and related costs |  |  |  |
| Travel, Accommodation and subsistence |  |  |  |
| Professional services fees e,g grant writer |  |  |  |
| Research strategy development support costs (e.g student bursaries/ buy-out of PhD or post-doc time) |  |  |  |
| Other costs |  |  |  |
| Total Funding Requested (GBP) | | |  |