
Ulysseus Seed Funding Programme for Joint Research and Innovation Groups

WP4 Joint Research

T4.1 Research & Innovation Groups



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Introduction

As part of its strategy of innovation-driven territorial transformation, Ulysseus European University aims to build up joint transdisciplinary Research and Innovation (R&I) groups made of Ulysseus researchers, plus innovators from associated partners and other stakeholders. The R&I groups will be created by using a bottom-up approach based on (i) common research disciplines (around faculties-specific research topics), and (ii) interdisciplinary research and innovation – around the Ulysseus Innovation Hubs challenges.

The *Ulysseus Seed Funding Programme for R&I Groups* invites academics from Ulysseus European University partners, as well as associated partners and other stakeholders, to form or strengthen Ulysseus international research and innovation teams to foster scientific collaboration and innovation across Ulysseus. Researchers are encouraged to apply for funding to establish interdisciplinary or thematic research and innovation groups that align with Ulysseus' strategic goals.

This programme was developed within WP4 Joint Research, by the taskforce of T4.1 Research & Innovation groups with participation from all Ulysseus member universities.

Definitions

Applicant: Individual researcher or member of local research and innovation teams from any Ulysseus partner university who is applying for the Ulysseus Seed Funding for R&I Groups. Researcher must have a legal contract at any of the Ulysseus partner universities and be eligible to use Ulysseus funds to be an applicant in the Programme.

Lead Applicant: The primary applicant who submits the application and assumes responsibility for managing coordination and communication among the other applicants.

Local Research Teams: Existing research and innovation teams working in any Ulysseus partner university, represented by a principal researcher.

Local Selection Committee: A committee established at each Ulysseus partner university to carry out the selection process within Programme's seed funding calls. It is chaired by the Chief Scientific Officer of the corresponding Ulysseus Innovation Hub.

Ulysseus Approval Committee: A committee responsible for technical administration of the seed funding calls within the Programme. The committee is composed of members from the Ulysseus T4.1 task force team and, optionally, the chairs of Local Selection Committees.

Ulysseus Experts Database: Database mapping research potential of Ulysseus European University, available at <https://ulyssseus.eu/experts/>. It is a comprehensive directory of Ulysseus researchers and is designed to extend its reach by incorporating associated partners and related stakeholders, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange across a wide network of experts.

Ulysseus partner universities:

- University of Seville, Spain (USE),
- Université Côte d'Azur, France (UniCA),
- University of Genova, Italy (UniGe),
- Technical University of Košice, Slovakia (TUKE),
- MCI | The Entrepreneurial School®, Austria (MCI),
- Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, Finland (HH),
- University of Münster, Germany (UM),
- University of Montenegro, Montenegro (UCG).

Ulysseus Innovation Hubs (IHs): The hubs are the innovative joint structure for collaboration which co-creates and develops all main activities within Ulysseus European University. Ulysseus has 8 Innovation Hubs (IHs), one at each partner university, which address eight research & development challenges shared with our regions and cities. The hubs work as concentrators of all the collaboration and cooperation activities coming from the Ulysseus community (the alliance and the associated partners). Hubs are connected to local nodes around each partner University, in order to consolidate the Innovation Ecosystem.

Ulysseus Research and Innovation Group (R&I Group): Research and Innovation group established within the Ulysseus Campus with members from at least two Ulysseus partner universities.

Young researcher: A researcher either up to 35 years of age or within 7 years of completing their PhD.

Programme Objectives and Conditions

Programme aims to strengthen research and innovation activities within Ulysseus European University by enabling the creation and enhancement of joint R&I groups and thus supporting individual researchers and teams from Ulysseus partner universities, joined by experts and innovators from associated partners and other stakeholders. The formation of R&I groups will contribute to (i) fostering scientific communication, stimulating the creation of research and innovation ideas, (ii) promoting individual research knowledge bases, and supporting follow-up activities that could lead to new project proposals from funding sources such as Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, or other international and national programs, and (iii) fostering innovation-driven territorial transformation. All these activities can facilitate the exchange and inter-sectoral mobility of researchers and innovators at all levels, allowing them to share experiences, knowledge effectively. The Programme activities are funded from the Ulysseus budget and are chronologically structured in the seed funding calls which will be gradually published, evaluated and implemented.

Types and scenarios of R&I Groups

The Programme understands two types of R&I groups within the Ulysseus European University:

1. **R&I groups** in common research disciplines (e.g. around faculties – specific research topics), engagement of associated partners or stakeholders is advised (not mandatory).
2. **Interdisciplinary R&I groups** around the Ulysseus Innovation Hubs topics, with engaging associated partners (inclusion of at least one associated partner or stakeholder is mandatory).

Based on these definitions, the Programme supports joint R&I groups creation in these three scenarios:

- Scenario 1: Creating a brand **new joint Ulysseus R&I group** by **combining individual researchers** from different Ulysseus partner universities, associated partners, relevant stakeholders.
- Scenario 2: Creating a new Ulysseus joint R&I group by **merging two or more existing Local Research Teams** from different Ulysseus partner universities or **expanding an existing Local Research Team** with new member(s) from other partner university(ies), associated partners and stakeholders.
- Scenario 3: **Expanding already an existing Ulysseus joint R&I group, previously funded by the Programme**, with new member(s) from other Ulysseus partner university(ies). This is applicable in later stages of the Programme.

Conditions

Every eligible applicant by the time of the application for any of the Programme's seed funding calls must ensure that these conditions are met:

- The proposed Ulysseus R&I group **consists of at least 3 researchers from at least 2 different partner universities**. For interdisciplinary R&I groups (related to the Ulysseus Innovation Hubs), the inclusion of at least one associated partner or related stakeholder is mandatory.
- **Before applying for the call, each academic member** of the proposed Ulysseus R&I group **is registered** as a researcher **with profile privacy level set to available to log-users** (public profile) in the Ulysseus Experts database. The same applies for members from the associated partners and stakeholders.
- Ulysseus R&I group has **one lead applicant** who submits the application on behalf of the group to the seed funding call (e.g.: if there are 7 partners involved, only 1 application can be submitted).

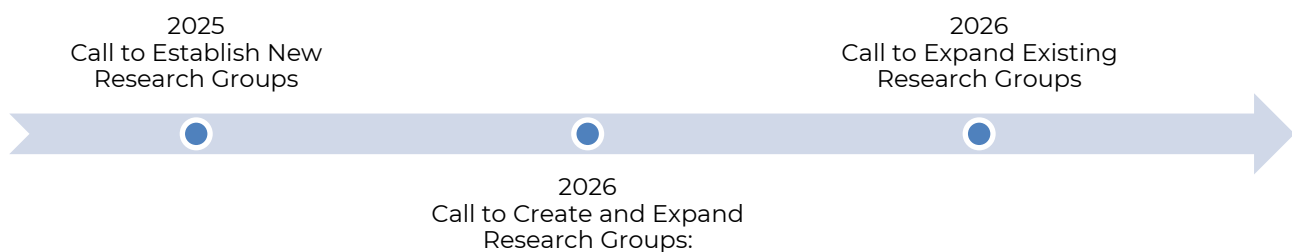
Researchers, experts, innovator from other institutions (than Ulysseus partner universities) can join and participate in the Ulysseus R&I Groups, **but not as beneficiaries**, and their contribution to the groups' activities should be clearly outlined.

It is recommended that any member of a group can be listed in one call only in one application (R&I group) and members of Local Selection Committees should not be part of evaluated Ulysseus R&I groups.

Seed Funding Calls

The Programme will feature three distinct calls:

- CALL 1: Establish New R&I Groups:** This call planned for 2025 aims to support the initial formation of joint R&I groups that can tackle emerging challenges.
- CALL 2: Establish New and Expand Existing R&I Groups:** This call scheduled for 2026 focuses on the enhancement of existing groups (already support by the Call 1) or the establishment of new groups to foster collaboration and innovation.
- CALL 3: Expand Existing R&I Groups:** This call planned for late 2026 is dedicated to provide resources and support to strengthen and expand the capabilities of R&I groups already established within the previous Calls.



The calls will be published through standard Ulysseus communication channels – Ulysseus website, social media and using the internal dissemination channels of all Ulysseus partners universities.

Application Process and Administration

Applications must be submitted in English using the application form provided in the call documents communicated through the university channels and on the ulysses.eu website. To submit successful application, we advise to establish communication among potential group members and agree on key aspects (such as the group objectives, name etc.), prior to starting the application process.

An application for each Ulysseus joint R&I group should be submitted by the lead applicant.

Budget

Allocated Budget for the Programme

The total allocation for the Programme is **423 000 EUR** and a **maximum of 3 calls** are planned. To effectively manage the total allocated budget across the planned calls, partner universities are encouraged to strategically manage their budget based on their specific needs. Any unspent budget from previous calls must be carried over and utilized in the subsequent calls.

The Ulysseus partner universities already have the Programme budget allocated in their partners' budgets (see the cost category C: Purchase Costs):

Partner University	Expected Number of Grants	Allocated Budget
University of Seville (USE)	21	63 000 EUR
Université Côte d'Azur (UNICA)	21	63 000 EUR
University of Genova (UniGe)	21	63 000 EUR
Technical University of Košice (TUKE)	18	54 000 EUR
MCI The Entrepreneurial School® (MCI)	11	33 000 EUR
Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences (HH)	11	33 000 EUR
University of Münster (UM)	21	63 000 EUR
University of Montenegro (UCG)	17	51 000 EUR

Budget for Granted Applications

The seed funding is intended to support in-person meetings where researchers collaboratively establish an R&I group, define member roles, objectives, and research areas. As a result, eligible costs must directly relate to these activities. The Local Selection Committee will propose the funds available for each application according to the internal strategy of the partner university. This strategy prioritizes either fewer R&I groups with a larger budget or many smaller R&I groups. As an orientation guideline, funding of up to 3 000 EUR per applicant can be allocated, but this will depend on the number, composition and relevance of the R&I groups per Ulysseus partner university. Each partner university will distribute the allocated amount according to their internal rules, either to the lead applicants, individual researchers or the IH.

The **grants will be provided in compliance with local legal and administrative procedures**, to cover the actual eligible costs outlined below. These grants may be provided either as a dedicated budget or a lump sum, depending on the specific local procedures or requirements. The allocated budget will serve as the funding source for eligible activities throughout the grant duration. Any unspent funds will remain within the Ulysseus project budget and may be reallocated to finance other grants within this support scheme.

Eligible costs that can be funded from the Programme:

- **Travel expenses** (travel, accommodation, subsistence), sustainable modes of travel are preferred (Erasmus+ mobility schemes should be used wherever possible),
- **Services for R&I group meetings, seminars, workshops** aiming to foster the networking of the alliance researchers and stimulate new projects funded through various schemes like Horizon Europe, Erasmus Plus, Digital Europe, Interreg, Life, etc. These costs can include venue costs (room rentals, setup and arrangement fees, etc.), materials (printed materials, workshop supplies, etc.), catering (refreshments, coffee breaks etc.),
- **Any other eligible cost**, upon prior consultation to the EC Project Officer through the Ulysseus General Manager.

Be aware, that **ineligible costs** include, but are not limited to:

- Overhead costs,
- Staff costs,
- Equipment costs,
- Conference fees,
- Third parties' services (consultation companies etc.),
- Proposal writing costs and costs of such associated activities.

The application must make clear in which way the funded activities are additional to ongoing activities and support the Ulysseus research aims.

The costs to be covered by grant must occur within the period up to **12 consecutive months** following the grant's approval.

Selection Process and Evaluation Criteria

The process for selection of the applications in each Programme's call is structure in the five phases:

- 1. Technical and Formal Review:** The Ulysseus Approval Committee collects and evaluates submitted applications from both a formal and technical perspective. If any criteria are not met, the committee will contact the lead applicant to request corrections or updates. Failure to comply within 15 days may result in the exclusion of the application.
If overlapping among different proposals is identified, the Ulysseus Approval Committee will propose a merging of the corresponding groups and request a new joint application within 15 days. If the merger proposal is declined, the lead applicant must inform the Ulysseus Approval Committee within 15 days. In such cases, the original application will be evaluated as initially submitted.
- 2. Distributing the applications to Local Selection Committees:** The Ulysseus Approval Committee will distribute the applications to the Local Selection Committees according to affiliations of the proposed R&I group.
- 3. Local Selection:** The Local Selection Committees will assess the applications based on the Programme's selection criteria. Each committee will propose and allocate funds for their applicants in line with their internal strategy, available funds, and local objectives.
- 4. Final approval:** The final approval at the Ulysseus level will be conducted by the **Ulysseus Approval Committee**. Only the application with **approval from at least two Local Selection Committees** will be processed for funding.
- 5. Notification and acceptance of applicants:** The Ulysseus Approval Committee will communicate the results to all joint R&I groups (their lead applicants) and all involved Local Selection Committees. The lead applicants will be asked to accept the decision to initiate the funding process.
If Ulysseus R&I group receives only partial funding—such as when not all universities of associated applicants approve funding (due to limitations in the local selection process, funding constraints, or other reasons) the group may still choose to proceed, either **with or without** not funded applicants. In such cases, they can utilize the assigned resources, adapt their plans to the available funding, or seek additional funding from other sources if relevant. If the group decides to proceed under these conditions and accepts the final decision, all requirements regarding outputs and reporting will still apply.
The final approval process will be considered complete only after receiving confirmation from lead applicant.

All applications must clearly demonstrate how they align with the scope of the Programme and how they support the objectives, vision, and mission of Ulysseus European University.

Please note that the Local Selection Committees reserve the right to introduce additional criteria based on the quality of the applications received.

Technical and Formal Review

Technical and Formal Review will be conducted as the first phase of the selection process in each Call. The review will be performed by the Ulysseus Approval Committee after collecting all applications and performing an initial formal review in the following areas:

1. **Formal and minimal requirements:** All members of the Ulysseus R&I group must be clearly identified, and the group must meet minimal requirements (for the size and involvement of partners).
2. **Public registration in the Ulysseus Expert Database:** Each member of the proposed Ulysseus R&I group must be registered as a researcher in the Ulysseus Experts database, with their profile privacy level set to "available to log-users" (public profile). The same requirement applies to associated partners.
3. **Harmonisation of the groups:** groups with similar topics or objectives will be proposed to merge. The Approval Committee will contact respective lead applicants with such proposal. Accepting the proposal will require a new application to be submitted and reviewed.
4. **Error corrections:** If mistakes or errors are found, the lead applicant will be asked to address and correct them.

Corrections or updates must be completed within 15 days upon their announcement.

After this phase, the applications will be forwarded to the respective Local Selection Committees for further assessment.

Local Selection

Each Ulysseus partner university will establish the **Local Selection Committee** with an odd number of members (**minimum of three**) and composing at least from:

- **IH Chief Scientific Officer** of the respective Ulysseus partner university Innovation Hub (as the chair of the Local Steering Committee),
- **Member of Ulysseus T4.1 task force,**
- **and at least one additional member** from the following groups: relevant researcher or institutional representative from the partner university.

Participation from associated partners and other stakeholders is up to the chair of respective Ulysseus partner university.

All applications submitted before the deadline will undergo an evaluation by the **Local Selection Committee**, based on the criteria outlined below. Applications will be assessed against **5 criteria**, with a **maximum possible score of 100 points**.

Committee members will assign points to each criterion as outlined above. The final score for each criterion will be calculated as an average of the points awarded by all committee members. The described assessment methodology serves as a guideline for the Local Selection Committee. The points serve solely as a tool to support the Local Selection Committee in their decision-making process regarding fund allocation. Applications can be ranked based on their total scores, but there is no minimum score required for approval. The decision on whether an application is approved depends on whether it is assigned a budget or not.

At this stage, the Local Selection Committee will **accept/propose a budget for R&I group members from their institution only**, following the university's internal strategy and the methodology outlined in this document.

The assessment results, along with the proposed budget, will then be forwarded to the Ulysseus Approval Committee for final review.

Criteria	Description	Max Score
1. Relevance and quality of group members	<p>Relevance and quality of members within the R&I group will be assessed based on their profiles in the Ulysseus Experts database, as well as affiliated links to relevant sources (such as ORCID profiles or full web links to the researchers' professional profiles).</p> <p>Additionally, interdisciplinarity will be considered for R&I groups that are associated with IHs topics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0–4: Minimal relevance or quality; limited or no experience in the field; no significant contributions. Not eligible for funding 5–8: Basic relevance; some experience in the field, but limited impact or quality of contributions. 9–12: Moderate relevance and quality; adequate experience and contributions, with some notable achievements. 13–16: High relevance and quality; significant experience, impactful contributions, and recognized expertise. 17–20: Exceptional relevance and quality; extensive experience, groundbreaking contributions, and high recognition. 	20
2. Number of group members, involved partner universities and associated partners /stakeholders	<p>Count of Ulysseus partner universities and associated partners/stakeholders (specially for R&I groups related to IHs) participating in the group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> < 3 members – not eligible 3-4 members – 4 points 5-6 members – 6 points 7-8 members – 8 points >9 members – 10 points 1 university – not eligible 2 universities – 4 points 3-4 universities – 6 points 5-6 universities – 8 points 7-8 universities – 10 points 	20
3. Alignment with Ulysseus priorities and potential for impact	<p>Relevance of the R&I group to Ulysseus priorities and its potential to contribute to meaningful impact.</p> <p>The degree of connection to Ulysseus strategic priorities and the specific goals of the Innovation Hubs (IHs), if applicable or importance of the group's discipline in providing transversal support to Ulysseus priorities. Likelihood of generating tangible benefits through follow-up activities, such as collaborative projects, joint initiatives, or partnerships.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0–4: Minimal alignment with Ulysseus priorities and low potential for future impact. 5–8: Basic alignment with Ulysseus priorities and limited potential for meaningful impact. 9–12: Moderate alignment and potential for impact, with some evidence of future collaboration opportunities. 13–16: Strong alignment with Ulysseus and IH priorities, with significant potential for impactful follow-up activities. 17–20: Exceptional alignment and clear potential for transformative impact through follow-up activities and collaborations. 	20
4. Long-term vision	<p>Clarity and feasibility of the group's long-term vision and R&I goals.</p> <p>Sustainability Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0–4: The vision is unclear or unrealistic, and there is no viable sustainability plan. 5–8: The vision is somewhat defined but lacks feasibility or alignment with strategic priorities; sustainability planning is weak. 9–12: The vision is moderately clear and feasible, with a basic sustainability plan that addresses some key aspects. 13–16: The vision is clear, feasible, and well-aligned with strategic priorities, supported by a strong sustainability plan. 17–20: The vision is exceptionally clear, highly feasible, and strategically aligned, with a robust, comprehensive, and innovative sustainability plan. 	20
5. Inclusion of women and young researchers	<p>Assessment of gender balanced teams. The presence of women and young researchers in the group.</p> <p>← 0 points / None → 20 points / Very high →</p>	20

Activity Phase of the Joint R&I Groups

After the successful acceptance of the application, the joint R&I can start working, developing and organising their activities within the period of 12 months.

Expected Outputs and Reporting

Successfully operating Joint R&I Groups are required to meet the following obligations:

- **Submit a Grant Report** with well-defined Ulysseus R&I group with its clear idea, objectives reached during the funded period, activities carried out, members involved, travels carried out, with an outline for next steps (activities plan, roadmap, follow up activities, etc.). This report is required to be submitted by the end of the 12-month period by the lead applicant.
- Submit **short Annual Report** of the R&I group activities (the report template will be provided on Ulysseus website). This report must be submitted annually in January till the end of the Ulysseus project, by the lead applicant.
- Participants must **update their Ulysseus Experts database profiles** to include the new Ulysseus R&I Group name.
- Participate in the **Programme's evaluation survey** which will be disseminated at the end of the 12-month period.

In the case that the formation or expansion of the **R&I group is unsuccessful**, and the group does not meet the expected goals, lead applicant must fulfil the following requirements:

- Submit a list of all activities of the R&I groups conducted with the support of the Programme.
- Submit a Grant Report detailing the reasons for the mission's lack of success.

Communication and Contact Information

R&I group leaders (lead applicants) are expected to strategically and effectively communicate and disseminate the group's results, outputs, and outcomes to various target audiences. This may include organizing a final dissemination event to ensure broader reach and impact.

The list of Ulysseus R&I groups will also be published in the Ulysseus website.

In case of any inquiries, suggestions and remarks regarding Ulysseus Seed Funding Programme, feel free to contact: research@ulyssseus.eu



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