

AURORA

Call for Incentive Research Projects, Thematic Summer Schools and Early- stage Researcher Mobilities

WP 5 Enhancing Quality of Research through
an Aurora Research and Innovation Community

Task Team 5.2
Academic collaboration and
community building

February 16, 2024

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GENERAL PURPOSE

Building on the progress in fostering scientific and academic collaboration in the first phase of AURORA, the present call intends to go further and launch tangible collaborative research actions between the AURORA universities. This call will support three types of key actions:

- (1) incentive and collaborative research projects,
- (2) thematic summer schools,
- (3) short term research secondments for early-stage researchers (up to 3 months).

It is anticipated that these actions will contribute to building scientific communities among the Aurora universities and raise awareness about Aurora on a broader academic level. In order to do so, we want to promote collaboration between researchers, create new scientific relationships, or strengthen existing ones, within the Aurora community.

The present call is inclusive of all research disciplines and topics (STEM¹, Health, Humanities, Social Science, economic sciences and management). The AURORA 2030 hubs (Sustainability & Climate Change, Digital Society & Global Citizenship, Health & Wellbeing, Culture: Diversities & Identities, and Social Entrepreneurship) are naturally included, but projects beyond these hubs are also eligible. Synergies with activities developed in Aurora's joint educational program (WP2 of Aurora 2030) are a plus.

This call will be repeated on an annual basis for at least 4 years.

EXPECTED PROPOSALS

(1) Incentive and collaborative research projects

Proposals need to include researchers from **at least three Aurora 2030 member universities, of which at least two need to be full members². One of the three members can be an associated university³** (note however that an associated university cannot receive any funding through this call). For each participating institution, the principal investigator⁴ must hold a permanent (or similar) position at its university.

The researchers apply as a group, describing their mission and vision. They put forward the mutual gains of the expected collaboration, in terms of complementarity of competences and approaches. Teams can be formed both within a single discipline, or can be multi-disciplinary. The call aims to support concrete exploratory research activities (experimental, theoretical, ...) which should go beyond simple networking. **The project duration is 2 years.**

¹ Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics

² Aurora 2030 full members: University of Iceland, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Universität Duisburg Essen, Universitat Rovira i Virgili, Université Paris-Est Créteil, Palacky University Olomouc, Universität Innsbruck, Copenhagen Business School, Università Federico II di Napoli.

³ Aurora associated members: Pavol Jozef Safarik University in Kosice, Kharkiv National University, University of Tetova, South West University Neofit Rilski, University of Minnesota.

⁴ The principal investigator is the academic leading the proposal.

Proposers are encouraged to make use of the shared research infrastructures identified in the first AURORA phase (<https://aurora-universities.eu/research-resources/>). Partners can also be found using the Aurora Connect Gateway (<https://aurora.openaire.eu>) or the Aurora doctoral pool (<https://aurora-universities.eu/doctoral-pool/>).

Proposers are encouraged to identify large-scale European calls for research collaboration (e.g. MSCA, Horizon Europe, or other dedicated programmatic EU research calls) and prepare a response to them during the duration of the project.

(2) Thematic summer schools

AURORA supports through this call **thematic summer schools for early-stage researchers** (PhD and postdocs mainly). These summer (or winter) schools will serve as a career development opportunity, a knowledge sharing hub, and as a network/community building activity for the participants and lecturers. In this way, the next generation of researchers with a strong Aurora identity is formed. The schools should cover a specific scientific theme for a short period of time (generally 1 or 2 weeks), decline it around a series of lectures, practical work, or conferences **hold by 5-10 (or more) experts from at least three Aurora 2030 full member universities** (see footnote 2 above). Experts or lecturers from higher education or research institutions outside of Aurora 2030 full members can be invited too but should represent a minority among the invited lecturers (<30%). Proposers must hold permanent (or similar) positions at Aurora full member universities.

The **focus of this action is disciplinary training**, not transversal skills (such as communication, grant writing, ethics, or similar).

(3) Short term research secondments for early-stage researchers

AURORA aims to encourage early-career researchers (Master, PhD, postdocs) to be seconded in a research laboratory or unit of an Aurora 2030 full member university. **These short-term research secondments can last up to 3 months.** The research to be conducted in the host laboratory/unit should be well defined and give the candidate important skills that are needed for his/her future research project. Research topics can be from all disciplines, as in key action 1.

Master⁵, PhD and post-doctorate researchers are eligible for this type of mobility. Candidates and host laboratories or research units must be from an AURORA 2030 full member university.

A candidate for secondment can apply him/herself. However, the supervisor must agree with the planned research project (signature required). Candidate and supervisor make sure, before submission, that the host unit is in capacity to welcome the young researcher in good conditions.

⁵ Since this type of mobility must take place in a research laboratory/unit, the Master student should already work on his Master thesis project.

BUDGET

Action 1 - Incentive and collaborative research projects will be granted up to 25.000 Euros for 2 years. The budget can be used to facilitate travel and networking, information sharing, gaining access to data, conducting preliminary research, and for preparing future responses to European calls for research projects. Up to five projects will be funded each year.

Action 2 - Thematic summer schools will be granted up to 20.000 Euros for their organization. These funds can be used to either cover operating costs or support the travel of lecturers and/or participants. Two of these schools can be supported each year.

Action 3 - Short term research secondments for early-stage researchers. The mobility must comply with internal regulations at each partner university. The researchers can be supported by either Aurora mobility funds or Erasmus+ mobility funds from their home university. Please contact your Aurora Institutional Coordinator to get the exact grant amount, before submission.⁶ It is intended to support approximately ten short term secondments every year.

HOW TO SUBMIT A PROPOSAL

For proposals and applications for the three key actions, please fill-out the respective forms available at the [Aurora website](#):

[Application for Action 1 - Incentive and collaborative research projects](#)

[Application for Action 2 - Thematic summer schools](#)

[Application for Action 3 - Short term research secondments for early-stage researchers](#)

Proposals need to be sent to aurora@u-pec.fr by 12:00 (noon) CEST April 30, 2024. The subject line should read: [Submission to AURORA research call 2024 _NAME (Principal Investigator) - University (of Principal Investigator)]. The name of the submitted file should read [Proposal KA (1,2 or 3) _NAME (Principal Investigator) - University (of Principal Investigator) _ (project acronym)]

EVALUATION PROCESS AND CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS

Proposals for the three key actions will be evaluated by a newly established **Aurora Research Council (ARC)**. This Council will include **representatives from all Aurora universities** and from different scientific disciplines. Depending on the complexity of received proposals they can be sent to external experts for peer review. The ASiC will make suggestions for funding. The final decision on funding will be made by the Aurora vice-rectors for research.

The schedule for submission and evaluation is as follows:

- Release of the call: February 16, 2024
- **Deadline for the submission of proposals: April 30, 2024**
- Decision on funding: June 30, 2024

⁶ [Who We Are | Aurora \(aurora-universities.eu\)](#)

- Funding period: September 2024 to September 2026 (key action 1). Summer school as well as research secondments (key action 2,3) must be completed by December 2025.

General criteria for selection of proposals are:

- A clear description of project goals, their originality and novelty as well as their scientific quality.
- A convincing argumentation of the **Aurora added value** of the intended collaboration, in particular for community building and the ability to respond to EU calls during the project duration (Action 1). Addressing a particular Aurora hub is also considered as an Aurora added value.
- A credible description of the provisional budget and eventual co-funding resources.
- Three partners from Aurora 2030 member universities are mandatory for proposals in key actions 1 and 2, see details above under Expected Proposals.

REPORTING

Reporting on project outcome are due 3 months after end of the project, the summer school, or the research secondment, respectively. An electronic form will be made available in due time. For key action 1 a short intermediate report is due 15 months after the project beginning. Reporting will include scientific publications (submitted or prepared) and proposals (or intentions) in response to European research calls.

Formal financial reporting is not required. The attributed budget is a lump sum which can be used as described in the proposal and as needed for the project.

COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION

Project leaders will be asked to give oral presentations of the outcome of their project at AURORA Biannual conferences in order to illustrate their efforts to foster scientific collaboration within AURORA.

QUESTIONS

Please address all your questions concerning eligibility, process and evaluation, or any other concern, to aurora@u-pec.fr.