



# OFFERR

## Call text and requirements

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## Document information

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## OFFERR Call announcement

The OFFERR project<sup>1</sup> funded by EURATOM announces a call for proposals. The goal is to facilitate international cooperation in nuclear research between European Union (and EURATOM associate Members) research organizations, universities, companies and their partners through financing trans-national access to key nuclear research infrastructures.

The call is open to project proposals within all disciplines and topics of research, development and innovation that are in line with the strategic research and innovation Agenda (SRIA) of the Sustainable Nuclear Energy Technology Platform (SNETP). The project proposals supported by other European associations and organizations acting within EURATOM framework will be also considered.

The beneficiaries are the organizations offering access to experimental infrastructures to selected project proposals and the research teams that are allowed to use the infrastructures for the work described within the project proposal. The applicants shall agree on the term of references upon submission of their proposals

The researchers applying for the access are expected to liaise with the organization that owns/operate the infrastructure (among those listed in the OFFERR user facility database) and agree on all the logistical and technical aspects of the proposed work. The proposals should be prepared jointly by the visiting team and the visited facility/facilities.

Two types of applications are possible:

- “fast-track project” to perform studies of limited scope which are to be completed in less than 6 months of access to the infrastructure. This type of project can be awarded a financial support up to 50 kEUR (consult the catalogue of fast-track activities),
- “complex project” to perform studies with extended scope to be completed in less than a year and a half (18 months). This second type of project can be allocated a financial support up to 1 MEUR<sup>2</sup>.

The proposal submission opens on the 3rd of April 2023 and it will last until the 28th of October 2025. The cut-off dates are planned to be the following (subject to eventual adaptation):

	Fast-track projects		Complex projects	
	Cut-off dates	Selection completed	Cut-off dates	Selection completed
1	16/05/2023	1.5 month later		2.5 months later
2	30/09/2023		30/09/2023	
3	31/03/2024		31/03/2024	
4	30/09/2024		30/09/2024	
5	31/03/2025		31/03/2025	
6	30/09/2025			

<sup>1</sup> This project is funded by the Horizon Europe programme under grant agreement n°101060008.

<sup>2</sup> If the cost is above 300 kEUR, the application will not be able to be funded by Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) process and the infrastructure owner will need to join the OFFERR project consortium.

After each cut-off date, the received applications will follow an eligibility check according to the European commission rules (see eligibility criteria) and then through the evaluation procedure (see evaluation criteria).

The selected project proposals will receive the financial support from the coordinator of the OFFERR project in compliance with the decision made by the consortium and endorsed by the Governing Board of the SNETP.

Detailed information on the proposal requirements, evaluation criteria as well as reporting of the achievements are contained in the following documents:

- Terms of reference
- Eligibility criteria
- Evaluation criteria
- User facility database (including the clusters of facilities and the fast-track catalogue)
- Guidelines for applicants
- Application template
- User report template
- Infrastructure report template

## OFFERR Eligibility criteria

1. It is mandatory that “Users” (the visiting team composed of one or more researchers) and “Infrastructure providers” provide the “Infrastructure agreement” signed by all involved parties in the proposal for an “infrastructure project” in accordance with the Terms of Reference. This agreement shall include among other the commitment of the infrastructure provider on availability and costs to be charged for the work described in the application.

2. Topics

The proposals shall aim at strengthening the leadership of the European union in the field of civil nuclear fission research, development and innovation.

The topics to be considered should also be aligned with the SNETP mission that is to support safe, reliable, and efficient operation of civil nuclear systems. This includes the following call areas:

- 1) Light Water Reactor sustainability,
- 2) Advanced fission reactor concepts,
- 3) Waste and decommissioning,
- 4) Nuclear science applications,
- 5) Advanced nuclear fuels,
- 6) Innovation in nuclear instrumentation,
- 7) Radioprotection and nuclear medicine.

3. Funding

- 3.1. The Users and Infrastructure providers shall belong to at least two different EU member states or associated countries. For this purpose, international facilities (as JRC) are considered as a different EU member state independently of the affiliation of the visiting research team.
  - 3.2. Non-EU partners (users and infrastructure) can contribute but are not eligible for funding.
  - 3.3. The maximal budget of a fast-track project funded by OFFERR is 50 kEUR.
  - 3.4. The maximal budget of a complex project funded by OFFERR is 1 MEUR. If an application exceeds this amount, it can still be approved and receive the maximal support if the applicants show they have all the remaining parts of the project funded elsewhere.
  - 3.5. If the budget is over 300 k€ the applicant and/or facility has to belong to the OFFERR consortium.
4. Timing
- 4.1. The OFFERR funded projects must:
    - start not later than 12 months after the date of the proposal approval;
    - be completed before the end of the OFFERR project 08/2026 (unless extended);
    - be completed in less than six months (fast-track projects) or 18 months (complex projects) of the access to the infrastructure.

5. Intellectual property agreement

The visiting researchers applying for the access should conclude an intellectual property agreement with the visited facility/facilities before the application submission. This requirement may be waived for fast-track projects.

## OFFERR Evaluation criteria

Submitted proposals are reviewed for scientific excellence, impact, and quality of implementation.

Each application is reviewed at least by two independent expert reviewers.

Each complex project application is additionally reviewed by the Science and Innovation Committee of SNETP.

At a minimum, proposals must meet the call requirements (eligibility criteria).

The evaluation criteria are the following:

1. Scientific excellence (30 or 40 % of the total score)<sup>3</sup>
  - 1.1. Scientific value and technical pertinence to the call area (state of the art)
  - 1.2. Methodology (credibility of the proposed approach)
  - 1.3. Innovativeness (relation with previous work in the same domain)
  - 1.4. Overall level and comprehensiveness of the proposal
2. Impact (40 or 30 % of the total score)<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> 30% for call areas 1, 2, 3, 5; 40% for call areas 4, 6, 7

<sup>4</sup> 40% for call areas 1, 2, 3, 5; 30% for call areas 4, 6, 7 (see the list of call areas in section 4.4 of Terms of Reference)

- 2.1. Scientific outcomes
  - 2.2. Impact and added value for end-users (industrial, societal), enhancing innovation capacity and integration of new knowledge
3. Quality and efficiency of implementation (30 % of the total score)
- 3.1. Applicant team / consortium (complementarity of participants' expertise, capacity of a principal researcher for leading the project)
  - 3.2. Feasibility / resources (within the given time, within the infrastructure)

Each sub-criterion (1.1-1.4, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2) is scored in the range: 1 (poor) – 2 (fair) – 3 (good) – 4 (excellent). The evaluation will be duly justified for each of these sub-criteria.

The main criteria (1, 2, 3) are not scored separately. The score of each main criterion equals the sum of the scores of its sub-criteria.

The threshold to be listed on the Ranked and/or Reserve list is the half of the maximum score for each of the three main criteria (i.e., 8 points for scientific excellence, 4 points for impact and 4 points for implementation).

The applications will be ranked based on the total score, which equals the sum of the weighted scores of the three main criteria (i.e. the maximum score in call areas 1, 2, 3, 5 is calculated as  $16*0.3+8*2*0.4+8*2*0.3 = 10.4$ .)

The evaluation matrix will serve as a basis for a fair, transparent, and efficient selection process.

## Guidelines for applicants

These guidelines for applicants relate to the OFFERR project opened on 03/04/2023 and aim to facilitate the preparation of the project proposal and to clarify the steps after the application submission. The entire process is summarized on the following application process flowchart.

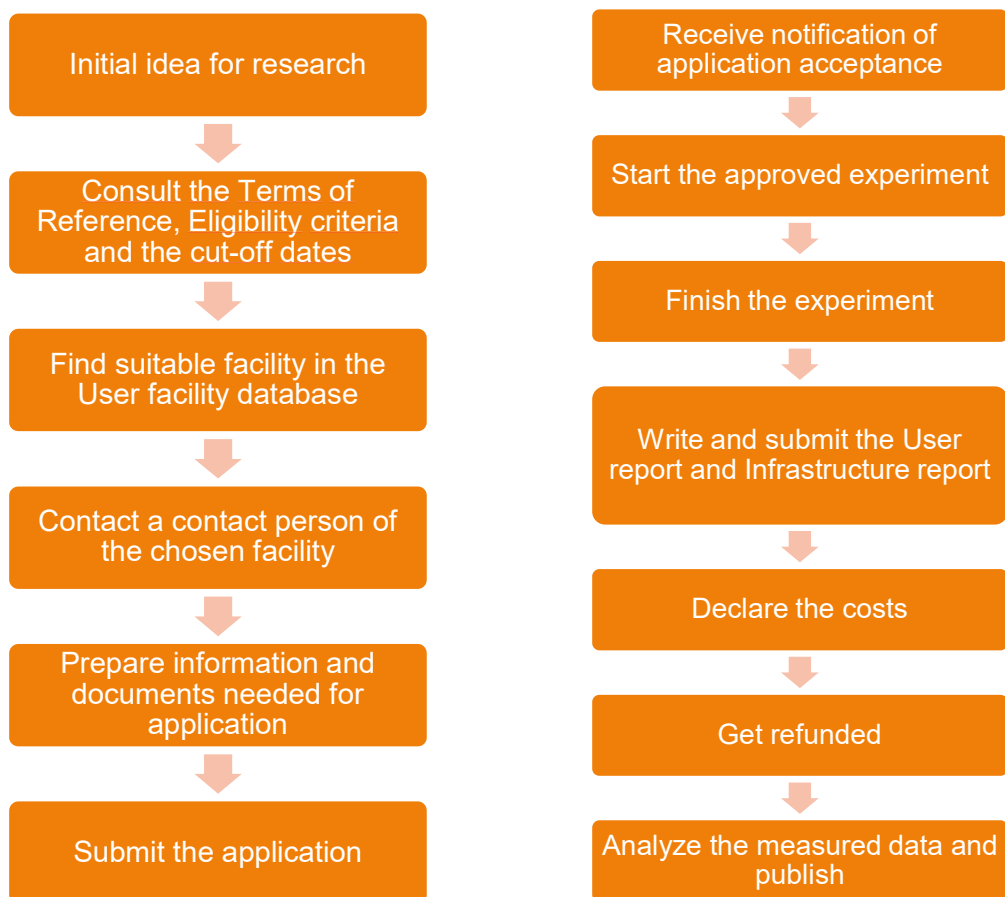


Figure 1 – Flowchart of the preparation of the application (left) and the steps after the application acceptance (right).

- 1) First, an applicant shall get familiar with the conditions described in the Terms of Reference document and the Eligibility criteria document.
- 2) An applicant can use the European User Facility Network (EUFN) brochure to choose the infrastructure(s) for performing the experiment.
- 3) An applicant shall contact the contact person of the chosen infrastructure and agree on the content and timing of the experimental campaign.



- 4) An applicant shall prepare a project proposal that includes the commitment of the infrastructure provider on availability and costs.
- 5) Applications shall be submitted through the electronic application submission system available at [link to the website]. After the application submission, the applicant will receive a confirmation email.
- 6) The submitted applications will be reviewed and ranked.
- 7) After the end of the evaluation process, applicant will receive a notification of application acceptance or rejection.
- 8) The approved experiment should start within 12 months after the notification of the approval.
- 9) The approved experiment should finish within 6/18 months in case of fact-track/complex projects.
- 10) The users should write and submit the User report. Infrastructure contact person should write and submit the Infrastructure report (within 2 months after the end of the experiment).
- 11) The users declare the costs and get refunded.
- 12) The users analyze the measured data and publish them.

## Terms of Reference

### 1. Glossary

**OFFERR:** refers to a project funded by the European Commission under the Horizon Europe/ Euratom programme. OFFERR acronym stands for eurOpean platForm For accEssing nucleAR R&d facilities.

**Infrastructure Projects:** are selected projects to take place in the framework of OFFERR.

**Users:** are parties (members and non-members of the OFFERR consortium) who will use a research infrastructure provided within the framework of the OFFERR project after a successful evaluation/selection.

**Infrastructure Provider:** is the owner/operator/authorized to administer the infrastructure in question that is to be used. Infrastructure Providers can be members of the OFFERR consortium as well as external third parties.

### 2. Introduction

The objective of the OFFERR project is to facilitate and promote access to key nuclear research infrastructures that provide essential and unique services to the European R&D community and are usually beyond the reach of individual laboratories.

Research teams (from academia, research centers or industrial laboratories) will be provided support to access state-of-the-art nuclear research infrastructure and technical expertise from experienced scientists and engineers of the infrastructure. The OFFERR Interactive Forum will facilitate exchanges between the

researchers and the infrastructures and potentially contribute to merging applications with similar objectives.

The OFFERR project will also support complementarity between the infrastructure access and EC mobility grants (coordination with the project proposal ENEN++). A submitted proposal may request funding for the use of one or more infrastructures.

The following activities that will contribute to the realization of the approved experiments are eligible:

- the costs that the User must pay to the Infrastructure Provider for the use of the infrastructure (e.g., training necessary for the access to the infrastructure; irradiation, post-irradiation examination);
- consumables directly related to the experiment (e.g., purchase of sample, target, detector, electronics and other supporting material, their transport and preparation);
- travel and subsistence (of the visiting researchers to the infrastructure to perform the preparation and experiment).

Two categories of applications are defined:

- **Fast-track project:** is a project to perform studies of limited scope which are to be completed in less than half a year (6 months) of access to the infrastructure. This type of project can be awarded a financial support of up to 50 kEUR.
- **Complex project:** is a project to perform studies with extended scope to be completed in less than a year and a half (18 months). This type of project can be allocated a financial support of up to 1 MEUR.

### 3. Funding and Implementation of Infrastructure Projects

Through this project, the partners intend to facilitate access to infrastructures in the field of research in the nuclear fission technology in alignment with the strategic research and innovation agenda of SNETP and other European platforms. The goal is to establish a fund matching process for scientific projects for which a specific research infrastructure is required.

#### 3.1. Funding

If and to the extent that a User uses the infrastructure of an Infrastructure Provider, the user must agree with the infrastructure provider (in the form of a bilateral agreement) on the eligible costs to be declared to the EU-project, and those that necessitates any other compensation to be bearded by any other party.

Costs of the Infrastructure Provider: In principle, it is intended that the participation of the Infrastructure Provider in the Infrastructure Project is limited to the provision of the infrastructure. If and to the extent that, in deviation from this, further participation of the Infrastructure Provider is foreseen within the scope of the Infrastructure Project, the financial flow depends on the type of collaboration.

In all cases, the application for an infrastructure project shall contain sufficient and tangible information about the costs. These costs (type, amount,...) shall be clearly defined and agreed upon (copy of the agreement signed by all involved parties is thus mandatory). The EU-project, as facilitator, does not interfere in the negotiation between Users and Infrastructure providers, but will assess the scientific and technical feasibility/excellence/etc according to the evaluation criteria described in the accompanied

document. Upon selection, the EU-project will clearly indicate the precise amount of the sponsoring to be provided to the selected Infrastructure project and the terms of eligibility of each item.

### 3.2. Call for proposals

The above-mentioned funding for users (financial support to third parties) will be announced in several rounds of calls for proposals, each in an open call for the general public. Potential USERS who are not party to this Consortium Agreement can apply with concretely formulated project ideas (project description and costs). According to the grant agreement of the OFFERR project, the funding per user not member of the OFFERR project, is limited to a maximum of 299.999 €. The eligible costs and activities will be developed by the parties as part of the work description within their proposal for an Infrastructure project and will be considered in the evaluation and selection of each proposal by independent peer reviewers. These Infrastructure Projects as well as the subsequent results and their use must be for peaceful purposes (no military use) and non-commercial purposes only.

The Users must not be companies within the meaning of state aid law.

### 3.3. Network of existing research infrastructure (facilities)

The call for proposals refers to a publication of the so-called "EUFN" consisting of a listing of all research infrastructures that open up research opportunities in the field of nuclear. This also shows the potential of the infrastructure, i.e. what potential work could be done there and what it is used for. The operator of the respective infrastructure (Infrastructure Provider) can already deposit general terms of use and specifications for potential infrastructure projects in this publication. The potential user must contact the desired Infrastructure Provider(s) before participating in a call, in order to coordinate the desired content and scope of the targeted Infrastructure Project.

Within the OFFERR project, an interactive Forum will be set-up that facilitates exchanges and dialogue between researchers and the infrastructures owners/operators, and that will potentially contribute to merge project ideas/applications that have similar/complementary objectives.

### 3.4. Selection of potential Infrastructure Projects

The selection of the Infrastructure Projects to be funded is based on objective, non-discriminatory criteria that are defined in the document "OFFERR-evaluation-criteria". On the basis of these selection criteria, external independent reviewers will decide which applicant should be considered for funding.

If an applicant is selected for funding, the coordinator, mandated by the general assembly of the OFFERR consortium, will forward the funding to the successful "Infrastructure project" according to the rules and regulations set by the European commission and the grant agreement. The successful applicant is obliged to comply with the regulations of the Grant Agreement and if deemed necessary with the Consortium Agreement (see article 1.1.6).

The forwarding of funds and the effectiveness of the Infrastructure project are subject to the condition that the selected applicant concludes an Infrastructure Agreement with the Infrastructure Provider.

The selected applicants become third parties of the coordinator in the sense of Article 9.4 of the Grant Agreement.

The topical orientations of the expected applications are grouped in seven call areas (as described below). These areas and their description may be changed by OFFERR during the lifetime of OFFERR. Information

will be provided in OFFERR webpage. Considerations will be taken as to the fact that the proposals shall take into consideration the on-going projects within EURATOM programme.

### **1) Light Water Reactor sustainability**

This call area is dedicated to LWR materials ageing and degradation (long term operation), technologies to mitigate ageing mechanisms (e.g. additive manufacturing), technologies to enhance safety and operational efficiency of existing nuclear power plants including plant lifetime management and lifetime extension for LWRs.

### **2) Advanced fission reactor concepts**

This call area is dedicated to innovative concepts (like Small Modular Reactors, Gen-IV reactors, Accelerator-Driven Systems), technologies to enhance safety, proliferation resistance, operational efficiency, safeguards and security posture of advanced nuclear reactor designs and fuel cycle technologies currently under development in the European Union and according to SNETP-pillar's vision.

### **3) Waste and decommissioning**

This call area is dedicated to advanced waste forms characterization and management, waste repositories and storage facilities, technologies for safer, cheaper, and faster dismantling and decommissioning of nuclear power plants and research reactors to complement the activities undergoing within EURAD partnership and PREDIS or any other on-going Euratom project

### **4) Nuclear science applications**

This call area is dedicated to nuclear science applications and improvements in core nuclear physics, nuclear data, and validation of simulation tools.

### **5) Advanced nuclear fuels**

This call area is dedicated to innovative manufacturing and fabrication techniques, accident-tolerant fuels, claddings, and materials, high burn-up and enrichment as well as pre-disposal management of spent fuel.

### **6) Innovation in nuclear instrumentation**

This call area is dedicated to developing advanced sensors and instruments for accurate, high-resolution measurements as well as advanced control systems to enable near real-time control of NPP or experimentation process variables.

### **7) Radioprotection and nuclear medicine**

This call area is dedicated to developing advanced technologies and instruments for radioprotection and nuclear medicine as complement to PIANOFORTE partnership.

## **3.5. Special rule for Infrastructure Projects exceeding 299 999 €**

If and to the extent that the funding of a User/External Infrastructure Provider exceeds 299 999 €, funding as a third party is excluded. In this case, the Coordinator will request an amendment to the Grant Agreement, whereby the User/External Infrastructure Provider in question will be included in the Grant Agreement as a Beneficiary and must join the Consortium Agreement.

## **3.6. Infrastructure Agreement**

In parallel to the regulation of the forwarding of funds, the selected applicant and the selected infrastructure provider must agree on a potential cooperation in the form of an Infrastructure Agreement.

The infrastructure provider is entitled to demand adjustments to the project description, in particular to comply with its legal and internal regulations. However, it may also refuse cooperation, in particular if the content of the project or cooperation with a specific selected applicant would not comply with the legal, political or ethical principles of the infrastructure provider, if conflicts of interest would arise or if there is simply not enough free capacity available.

The agreement between the users and the infrastructure provider must include an Intellectual Property (IP) section (may be waived in case of a fast-track project) that determine the property of the results and follows European Commission policy: application projects must be as open as possible and as closed as necessary.