



Swiss-Croatian Cooperation Programme

“Tenure Track Pilot Programme” (Call identification: TTP-2018-07)

4- 5 projects will be funded

Opening date: 3 April 2018

Closing date: 3 July 2018

This call for proposals is based on the Framework Agreement between the Swiss Federal Council and the Government of the Republic of Croatia concerning the implementation of the Swiss-Croatian cooperation programme to reduce economic and social disparities within the enlarged European Union and its annexes. By applying to the Call you accept its terms and obligations. The terms in the masculine gender used in this Call for Proposals are neutral and refer to persons of either gender.

About the call for proposals:

Goal: piloting a new model for career development of excellent young researchers in Croatia

Duration of the call: 3 April 2018 to 3 July 2018

Field of research: Engineering (e.g. electrical & mechanical engineering, microelectronics, advanced manufacturing, materials, nanotechnology, robotics, biomedical engineering, environmental and ecological engineering), Computer Sciences (e.g. data sciences, communication systems), Basic Sciences (e.g. physics, neurosciences, life sciences, chemistry). Interdisciplinary proposals are highly welcomed.

Principal investigator: researcher of any nationality in early stage of their career

Host Institution: Croatian public universities and public scientific institutes, Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts

Overall budget for the programme (incl. operative costs of the programme):
4.700.000 CHF or 32.347.054,40 HRK

Maximum CSF financing per project: 900.000 CHF to 1.100.000 CHF or from 6.194.117 HRK to 7.570.587 HRK

Duration of financing: 5 years

Starting date of the project: 1 January 2019

The Tenure Track Pilot Programme (TTPP) is a joint venture of Croatian Science Foundation (CSF), Ministry of Science and Education (MoSE) and Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) that focuses on preparation of a model for career development of top young researchers in Croatia. The tenure track advancement system is currently not implemented in Croatia, while it is getting a lot of attention on the European level. As an example of this, the League of research intensive universities (LERU) published an advisory paper on the subject in 2014¹ and the European Commission is recognizing the tenure track system as a very promising instrument to offer attractive research career prospective to young talented researchers.

TTPP will offer to young researchers a long-term perspective based on an open, fair, transparent and merit-based selection process. Research and development activities will

¹https://www.ub.edu/portal/documents/34829/458399/LERU_AP17_tenure_track_final%5B1%5D.pdf/71d48297-0158-4785-bbcf-b2976575e769.

be focused on topics that are of importance for the technological development of the country and research areas that may drive the economic growth.

Excellent researchers, strong research groups, innovative and original research evaluated in accordance with the internationally recognisable criteria and procedures are a precondition for strengthening international cooperation, competitiveness and research-based economy, development and innovation.

Tenure track is defined as “a fixed-term contract advertised with the perspective of a tenured, i.e., permanent, position at a higher level, subject to positive evaluation and without renewed advertising of and application for the next position”².

Through the Swiss-Croatian Cooperation programme, the TTPP will support the development of 4-5 research groups within the Croatian public research institutions. As such it should increase the quality of research activities performed by research institutions and the quality of doctoral programmes for the next generations of young researchers.

With this programme, the EPFL will transfer its rich expertise on the tenure track scheme to Croatia. The selection procedure will be based on an open call, proposed research plan and track record of applicants and rigorous reviews by international experts. Furthermore, the MoSE will carry out a mid-term and ex-post evaluation of the TTPP.

Aim of the programme

The TTPP is designed to support excellent young researchers at the early stage of career where they can start their own independent research groups and to enable them to gain competences and conditions for the employment as professors or senior scientists at universities and scientific institutes. The pilot system will be directed towards the institutional promotion of research excellence, raising innovative capacities and developing a mentorship system based on a high quality research. Hence, if the TTPP is evaluated as successful it will be considered as one of the possible employment measures which could open the path to long-term solutions for future employability of young researchers in Croatia.

A typical research group funded by this programme will consist of a Principal Investigator (PI), 1-2 doctoral students and 1-2 postdoctoral researchers. Additional positions might become available through third-party funding, such as Horizon 2020 or other research grants or industry-funded programmes.

²https://www.ub.edu/portal/documents/34829/458399/LERU_AP17_tenure_track_final%5B1%5D.pdf/71d48297-0158-4785-bbcf-b2976575e769.

Who is eligible to apply?

The Principal Investigators must fulfil the following conditions:

- researcher willing to pursue an academic research career in Croatia,
- must at the date of recruitment be in a possession of doctoral degree; the period between the date of the PhD award and the call deadline must not be shorter than two years nor longer than seven years³,
- must have excellent research and academic track record,
- submit a promising research plan for 5 years,
- not permanently employed at a Croatian research institutions (public universities, public scientific institutes, Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts),

Application for a grant must be submitted by the PI.

The Support Letter signed by the Host Institution will confirm the Host Institution's commitment to welcome and adequately host the PI. This includes a firm commitment for laboratory premises and/or office for the whole duration of the project, together with the administrative and technical support.

The PIs who exceeds the time limit of seven years since the time he was awarded for the period between the date of the PhD award and the call deadline may be accepted under certain circumstances⁴.

Host institution

Any public university, public scientific institute and Croatian Academy of Sciences and Art can host the PI. An applicant can submit a proposal only in the scientific area for which the Host Institution is accredited. The Host Institution must have significant experience in the implementation of research activities at international level; these strengths are to be presented in the project proposal. The Host Institution must furthermore guarantee the adequate support to the PI by guaranteeing laboratory and office space and his independence in pursuing research activities, setting up and running his research group.

³ Including the date when the call for proposals is closed.

⁴ Applicants with more than 7 years of experience after the PhD award will be considered if they deliver a confirmation of maternity or paternity leave, clinical practice if conducted after the PhD award or illness. These periods will be deducted from the time elapsed from the date of PhD award. In none of these cases, the time elapsed since the PhD award cannot exceed 10 years.

The applicant must submit the Host Institution Support Letter signed by the authorized representative of the Host Institution.

The letter has to:

- include the description of the Host Institution's capacities, specified research and administrative support for the particular project, along with dedication to enabling appropriate working conditions for the researchers, as well as confirmation of research freedom and independence in selecting and managing the research group and controlling the budget;
- include the confirmation of full adherence to the principles of the European Charter for Researchers,
- provide support to the PI and his team members during the project implementation (in particular laboratory and office space),
- support the PI in managing the research group and provide appropriate administrative assistance (particularly as regards the general management, financial reporting, organization of project meetings and general logistics of the project) and
- describe how the proposed research is fitting to the Host Institution's strategy.

The Host Institution will need to commit the mentor for the PI which will not be remunerated. Additionally, the EPFL will nominate one international mentor for each PI. He will visit the PI once a year during the project implementation. The visit will usually be planned during the 10th month of every project year so that the mentor can prepare input for the report of the progress of the PI. If he is not able to visit ahead of the evaluation, the visit can take place at another time, but the skype conference will be organised before the evaluation. Mentors will be chosen on basis of the following criteria: a) scientific activities - publications, projects, patents, international cooperation; b) mentorship experience. The mentors shall have at least 10 years of working experience after the PhD award.

The role of mentors is to help and guide the PI throughout the project and regularly discuss his research strategy, results and plans for new projects. The mentors have an obligation to submit narrative reports on the progress of the PI for the annual, mid-term and final evaluation.

Funding

Overall budget of the programme is 4.700.000,00 CHF or total of 32.347.054,40 HRK. Each project will be funded with total of 900.000,00 to 1.100.000,00 CHF (from 6.194.117 to 7.570.587 HRK), in line with the approved Work Plan and Financial Plan. However, depending on the nature of the proposed research activities, a lower project volume might be agreed during the financial negotiations. The budget has to be distributed throughout the duration of the project according to the project Work Plan.

Grants are awarded to the institutions that host the PIs. It is estimated that 4-5 projects will be financed within this programme.

Eligible costs must be directly connected to the project:

- Personnel costs, up to 43% of total programme costs, including social security contributions and other salary related costs according to the Croatian regulations for the PI, doctoral students and postdoctoral researchers. Personnel costs should account for half of the proposed total project budget. Personnel costs and personnel cost categories have to be in line with the Croatian national legislation.
- Equipment and maintenance, up to 24% of total programme costs. Purchase of the equipment must be budgeted in the first year of the project implementation.
- Research costs up to 17% of total programme costs: consumables, books, computers, memberships, publications, dissemination, subcontracting etc.
- Mobility allowance up to 8% of total programme costs: conferences, seminars, short visits up to 3 months, networking, subsistence costs etc.;
- Overhead costs for the Host Institution (maximum 5% of total project costs). These costs do not need to be justified by invoices or similar, but are paid as a lump-sum.

The following costs are not eligible:

- expenditures incurred before and after the duration of the project,
- interest of debt, purchase of land / real estate,
- fines, financial penalties and expenses of litigation,
- losses connected with currency exchange,
- costs which exceed the usual market prices,
- VAT, if it could be recoverable by the beneficiary under national regulation,
- activities supported by other entities and
- the purchase of equipment, materials and supplies not directly necessary for the project.

Application deadline: 03 July 2018 at 13:00 (CET).

Project proposals are submitted in English. The evaluation of proposals will be done by independent international experts, to ensure that only proposals of the highest quality are selected for funding. Financial Plan has to be stated in HRK.

Application is submitted by the PI on behalf of the Host Institution (the applicant is the legal entity).

All application documentation is submitted at the same time via the Electronic system for the project proposal application available at: <https://epp.hrzz.hr/>.

Application Form, number of pages and characters are strictly defined.

The call documents and the relevant regulations can be found on the CSF website.

Pre-registration is obligatory.

Important notice: before applying to the call for proposals it is obligatory to pre-register. Deadline for pre-registration is 20 May 2018, 13:00 (CET). Pre-registration will be submitted into the EPP system on official form.

Pre-registration must include:

- 1) **Pre-registration form**
- 2) **Host Institution Support Letter.**

Pre-registration will be used for the organisation of the evaluation in line with the areas covered by the project proposals. Pre-registration form is not part of the official project documentation and will not be evaluated. However, the information in the pre-registration form has to be in accordance with the project proposal. If you pre-register, but are finally not able to submit a full project proposal, please send us an e-mail to let us know as early as possible. The project proposals that were not pre-registered but are still submitted will not be accepted.

Application must include:

1. Administrative Form – must contain original signature of the Principal Investigator and the Head of the Host Institution as well as Host Institution's official stamp.

2. Project proposal containing:

- **Application form:**
 - Part A – contains Principal Investigator's CV, 5-year track-record including publications and other relevant achievements;

- Part B – contains a detailed description of planned research in the context of achieved results and the latest developments in the area of research, objectives, methodology, Work Plan, financial resources and ethical issues;
 - Part C – contains a description of roles and tasks of research group members.
- **Financial Plan.**
 - **Work Plan:** it must be clear and include major scientific activities, goals and duration, milestones that indicate establishment of new research group (with the number of PhD students and postdoctoral researchers, planned number of scientific publications that will be published in peer reviewed journals, number of expected PhD thesis, equipment bought etc.) which will be evaluated during the application procedure, as well as during the implementation of the project;
 - **Host Institution Support Letter** (with elements specified in the document).

3. Supporting documentation

- Copy of PhD diploma containing official date of the PhD award
- Other documentation, including ethical clearance (if relevant), documentation related to career breaks (if relevant) and other.

Documentation listed under 1 and 2 is mandatory for all applicants. Incomplete applications and applications submitted after the deadline will not be accepted for evaluation.

If there are any ethical issues, the PI is obliged to provide a clear and concise explanation of the ethical issues of planned research and the mitigation plan. Ethical Committee's opinion should be uploaded under "Supporting documentation". If not provided together with the application documents, this certificate can be requested during evaluation procedure and has to be delivered before financial negotiations.

Evaluation

The project proposals will be checked for eligibility. Only project proposals with complete and certified documentation that meet the Call conditions will be evaluated.

The evaluation of project proposals includes international peer review and evaluation conducted by the Evaluation Panel. The Evaluation Panel will consist of international

experts, selected by the EPFL and the CSF. The EPFL representative will be an observer during the evaluation process.

Based on the results of the peer review and the recommendations of the Evaluation Panel, the Board of CSF will make the final decision about the projects that will be funded.

Criteria for the project proposal evaluation are available at: www.hrzz.hr. Proposals will be evaluated against the following criteria:

1. Principal investigator:

- qualifications, scientific productivity and research track record;
- capacity and ability to explore new and important scientific topics;
- experience and potential for establishing an independent research group and conducting research.

2. Excellence, originality and impact of the research plan proposed:

- merit and importance of the proposed project, in relation to current research in the corresponding scientific field;
- the innovative aspects, the working hypothesis, and methodology and competitiveness of the project proposal in relation to current research in the scientific field;
- possible impact that this project may have on the scientific field; potential for publishing results in scientific journals with high impact factor and/or scientific books; - potential for commercialization of research results or the possibility of patenting (if applicable);
- feasibility of the Work Plan.

3. Host Institution Support

- equipment at the disposal of the PI Commitment;
- support of the Host institution and its ability to provide necessary administrative and technical support, laboratory and office space that will be at the disposal of the PI and the research group;
- Host Institution's overall support and commitment to the PI and the proposed research

Additional information for the PI

Obligations of the PI:

- compliance with the project's Work Plan and Financial Plan and other contractual obligations;

- accountability in project management, transparent and efficient financial management;
- research results must be made publicly available, published in scientific journals and other publications available to general public;
- annual narrative and financial reporting on the project progress and any additional reports requested;
- submit file for the mid-term and final evaluation;
- reports on the progress of doctoral students working on the project: after 18, 36 and 48 months (the final report has to be submitted within 15 days after the PhD thesis defence);
- in case that the Host Institution is a public research institute, an agreement to teach at the Croatian university needs to be submitted in writing. The PI needs to spend enough time teaching to achieve necessary experience to be eligible for the position of the assistant professor;
- development and maintenance of the project web page at the Host Institution's domain.

Mid-term and final evaluation of the PIs will be organized by the CSF. It will be conducted by the international experts proposed by the EPFL and CSF. In case of negative mid-term evaluation, the Grant Agreement will be terminated. The remaining funds will be distributed to other PIs who are financed within this programme.

Contact

All enquiries related to the Call will be accepted only **via the following e-mail address:**
ttp@hrzz.hr