

# CHARTER

## CELSA Research Fund 2026-2028

'CELSA' is an alliance of European universities (see <http://celsalliance.eu>).

The *CELSA Partners* are:

- Budapest University of Technology and Economics (BME), represented by its rector
- Charles University (CUNI), represented by its rector
- Czech Technical University in Prague (CTU), represented by its rector
- Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), represented by its rector
- KU Leuven, represented by its rector
- University of Ljubljana (UL), represented by its rector
- The Jagiellonian University of Kraków (UJ), represented by its rector
- University of Warsaw (UW), represented by its rector

CELSA is governed by the *CELSA Board* (see <http://celsalliance.eu/members.html>).

Upon agreement by all partners, an additional university may join CELSA and the CELSA Research Fund. In such case an additional covenant to this Charter will be signed by the new and the above mentioned CELSA partners.

### 1. Concept of the CELSA Research Fund

The CELSA Board meeting in Ljubljana on 14 September 2016, decided on the establishment of a common research fund, the *CELSA Research Fund*, that will jointly fund collaborative research projects between researchers of at least two CELSA Partners (KU Leuven and one other CELSA Partner), with the purpose of leveraging their efforts towards future applications within the European Framework programs or any other competitive European fund.

This *Charter* lays out the details regarding the commitment of the participating CELSA Partners, the guidelines for applicants and the call for proposals, the evaluation procedure including the selection criteria and the establishment of the joint evaluation committee, and the granting process.

### 2. Establishment of the Fund

The CELSA Partners jointly launch an open call for proposals once a year, in a third period of three years (after which the scheme will be evaluated, revised, continued or discontinued), starting in 2026. The CELSA Partners will each fund their own researchers in a project that is conducted by at least two researchers, at least one from KU Leuven and at least one from one other CELSA Partner.

### 3. Budget

#### 3.1. Contribution

KU Leuven will contribute in total a maximum of 1,8 million euro for three calls spread over three years, each for maximum 600k€.

All the other CELSA Partners contribute in principle at least about € 30,000 per year, the maximum budget for 1 project. The contributions will consist of new project funds (and not be in kind contributions, e.g. covered by the existing salary costs of the researchers participating in the joint projects).

In principle a maximum of 10 projects will be funded per annum, at least 1 per partner, depending on the number and quality of the applications. Depending on the scoring and ranking and budgetary constraints of each partner, some partners (other than KU Leuven) can also fund two or more projects per year. In case less projects are being selected by the CELSA Research Fund Evaluation Committee, or in case in a certain year an individual CELSA Partner will be granted no projects or less projects than their committed budget allows for, the remaining annual budget will be transferred to the next call.

#### 3.2. Size of the projects

The Fund will fund joint research projects with a maximum of € 90,000 for a duration of 2 years, in case researchers from two CELSA Partners are involved (a KU Leuven researcher and a researcher from one other CELSA Partner). KU Leuven allocates a maximum of €60.000per project, and the other CELSA Partner contributes a maximum of € 30,000 per project. The funding goes to the own participating scientist.

In case researchers from more than two CELSA Partners are involved in a single joint project, the budget is increased with their share (e.g. a project with researchers from 3 CELSA Partners will have a maximum budget of € 120,000 for 2 years). In case more than one researcher from the same CELSA Partner is involved in a single joint project, the total project budget as mentioned is not increased.

#### 3.3. Financial contribution commitment

By signing this Charter, the CELSA Partners formally confirm their commitment regarding their above mentioned financial contribution (section 3.1).

### 4. Publication of calls for proposals

The CELSA Partners will launch a joint call at the same time and inform their research community internally. The call for proposals has to specify the conditions, the available funding per project, and the time frame.

Time schedule for the upcoming three calls for proposals (2026-2028):

- Publication call: July (year before funding decision)
- The deadline for submission: November/December (year before funding decision)
- Evaluation of project proposals: December (year before funding decision) – March (year of funding decision)
- Final decision: CELSA Board meeting in May or June of the year of the funding decision
- Announcement of the results: July-August of the year of the funding decision
- Start of the projects: 1st October of the year of the funding decision

**Conditions:**

- Any scientific discipline qualifies for funding by the CELSA Research Fund.
- The applicant consortium has to consist of at least one KU Leuven researcher<sup>1</sup> and one researcher from one other CELSA Partner.
- The project funding can be used freely by the researchers involved<sup>2</sup>, as long as the activities concern research, strengthen the collaboration within the CELSA network, and can lead to a high quality application for any of the European competitive funds as mentioned. Research staff can be appointed on the project budget.
- Within 3 years of the start of the project funded by the Fund, the applicant consortium (including additional partners) has to jointly apply for a call for proposals for a European competitive funding program, such as a collaborative research project in a EU Framework program call (including Marie Skłodowska-Curie innovative training networks, FET Open, Societal Challenges,...). Not complying to this requirement makes CELSA applications of any of the involved PI's ineligible in the 2 calls with a deadline following the 3 year timeframe.
- Every PI can have only 1 CELSA project at the time.

**5. Project proposal template**

The project proposal to be submitted to the CELSA Research Fund call for proposals has to contain following information:

- **Cover page** (max. 1p): title, name, affiliation, and e-mail address of the researchers involved, an indication of who will be the leading scientist of the project (coordinator), a title and non-confidential and public-friendly abstract or summary (max. 2000 characters), and up to 5 key words.
- **Project description** (max. 4p): problem statement & objectives, envisaged progress beyond the state of the art, methodology, anticipated results, managerial aspects and timing.
- **Resources** (max. 1p): description of the available resources (incl. infrastructure and equipment) and the proposed use of the project budget applied for (in detail) to acquire new resources, linked to the methodology.
- **Added value of the collaboration** (max. 1p): description of the consortium of researchers from the CELSA Partners and added value of the collaboration to the envisaged research activities.
- **Potential towards a future EU funding application** (max. 1p): description of the potential towards a future joint application as well as the linkages to a call for proposals of a European research funding program, specifying the future call (e.g. Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) , European Framework program call, ERA-Net call, cPPP call, ...); description of the relevance of the collaboration for that call, program, or European research & innovation policy or focus area (this may include aspects of innovation and potential future impact of the research or collaboration, if relevant in the future European call); proposed timelines and planning towards the future European application (including perhaps specifying types of additional partners outside CELSA required for the collaborative projects)

---

<sup>1</sup> (internal KU Leuven regulation) The KU Leuven researcher has to comply with the General Regulations for internal funds.

<sup>2</sup> Any contribution of ELTE or BME shall be used according to the relevant internal rules and regulations of ELTE or BME respectively. Any item funded by the contribution of ELTE or BME, shall be approved ex ante by ELTE or BME, where relevant.

- **CV of the involved researchers** (max. 1p per participating researcher): short description of the expertise, 5 most important publications relevant to the proposal, indication of previous (most important) European or international collaborations.

## 6. Submission of project proposals and eligibility check

As KU Leuven will be participating in all the projects funded by the joint Fund, the online submission system of the KU Leuven Internal Funds will be used. Consequently, the KU Leuven researcher in the consortium will have to submit the joint project proposal.

The KU Leuven Internal Funds unit will administer the applications, check eligibility of their own researchers with the partners, and present the applications to the CELSA Research Fund Evaluation Committee (see below).

The Internal Funds unit will inform the CELSA partners of the number of applications, involved CELSA Partners, and the titles of the applications.

## 7. Establishment of the CELSA Research Fund Evaluation Committee

The evaluation and selection of CELSA Research Fund project applications will be performed by a dedicated interdisciplinary '*CELSA Research Fund Evaluation Committee*' (or '*Evaluation Committee*'), which will be composed of:

- 6 members of the KU Leuven Council for International Cooperation Projects ([RISP](#)), delegated by the Research Council of KU Leuven )
- 1 distinguished scientist of each of the other CELSA Partners, who has experience with international evaluations.
- The KU Leuven chair of the KU Leuven RISP chairs this Evaluation Committee.

The members need to have complementary expertise as much as possible.

- New CELSA Partners will submit three names and short resumés of experienced scientists, from different scientific disciplines to KU Leuven Internal Funds unit.
- The Evaluation Committee chair proposes a candidate to the president of the CELSA Board who finally decides on the selection of the members of the Evaluation Committee based on (complementary) expertise.
- Members are appointed until the end date of the current Research Fund Charter and their term is 1 time renewable for max. 3 years.

The members are considered to evaluate purely on the quality of the submitted proposals, independently of their institution, and to not take into consideration any institutional or geographical priorities. The Evaluation Committee members, the remote referees, as well as the KU Leuven Internal Funds unit are strictly bound to confidentiality and cannot disclose any information regarding the evaluation of the project proposals or the evaluation to any third party.

The Evaluation Committee can evaluate and rank the project proposals in full autonomy. The Evaluation Committee then formulates a final advice to the CELSA Board , who will take the final decisions on the funding.

After each call, the CELSA Board will evaluate the call results, and may advise to introduce changes or additional criteria for consecutive call(s) for proposals.

## 8. Selection procedure

### 8.1. Reviewing process

The eligible proposals will be sent to all the members of the Evaluation Committee.

Depending on the disciplines involved (based on the proposal abstract and the keywords), the KU Leuven Internal Funds unit selects 3 (up to 4) relevant remote experts (expert scientists from the CELSA partners; at least one expert from KU Leuven and at least one from another CELSA Partner) for each proposal. The experts remotely review the proposals assigned to them, based on below mentioned criteria.

The expert reviewers remotely submit a score as well as evaluation comments to each of the proposals assigned to them into the online evaluation system of KU Leuven. The Internal Funds unit collects all the scores and comments, and reports to the Evaluation Committee. The scoring system of the KU Leuven Internal Funds will be used. All evaluations will be reported back to the Evaluation Committee and will be used to base the final evaluation upon.

The Evaluation Committee meets once to discuss the scoring and comments, to reach a consensus on the final score for each project, and to rank the proposals.

The CELSA Board will be informed by the Internal Funds unit about the ranking of the projects, including the names and affiliations of the successful applicants and will make the final decision in line with the following principles:

- At least one project will be selected for each partner, if the threshold for financing was reached.
- Further granting is based on competition, following the quality assessment of the Evaluation Panel and the financial possibilities from the different partners.
- When choices have to be made between projects of equal quality, applications with more partners will have an advantage.

### 8.2 Selection criteria

The submitted project applications will be evaluated based on (1) scientific quality, (2) the potential of the collaboration and its added value for the CELSA network, and (3) the potential towards a future European competitive fund application for collaborative research, including aspects like innovation and socio-economic impact when relevant.

- Scientific quality (60% of the scoring):
  - To what extent does the proposed research address important challenges?
  - To what extent are the objectives ambitious and beyond the state of the art (e.g. novel concepts and approaches or development between or across disciplines)?
  - To what extent is the outlined scientific approach feasible? To what extent is the proposed research methodology appropriate to achieve the goals of the project?
  - To what extent are the proposed timescales and resources necessary and properly justified?
- Added value of the collaboration (20% of the scoring):

- To what extent is the proposed partnership relevant to the proposed project objectives? To what extent do the involved researchers have complementary expertise?
- To what extent has the proposed partnership the potential to become sustainable?
- Potential towards future acquisition of European competitive funding (20% of the scoring):
  - Does the proposed activity greatly help move the research collaboration towards the initial steps of a process leading to a future European collaborative research project?
  - Does the proposal indicate a suitable and credible process that is designed to result in a concrete application for a European competitive program?
  - Where relevant for the indicated European competitive funding program call, are aspects like innovation and socio-economic impact sufficiently addressed?

### 8.3. Communication of the evaluation results

The KU Leuven Internal Funds Unit will communicate the results to all the applicants from all CELSA Partners, including the anonymous review comments.

A redress to the decision of the CELSA Board is possible in case of mistakes regarding the procedure and should be submitted within 20 working days of the communication of the decision to [contact@celsalliance.eu](mailto:contact@celsalliance.eu).

Rejected applications may be re-submitted to the next annual call of the CELSA Research Fund.

The abstracts, names, and titles of selected projects may be used for external communication purposes by the CELSA Partners<sup>3</sup>.

## 9. Granting process

### 9.1. Assignment of funding to the selected projects

Each of the CELSA Partners contracts the own researcher in the winning joint project, after the final decision of the CELSA Board.

- The KU Leuven Internal Funds Unit will start the usual internal procedure to provide the selected KU Leuven researcher (or research group) with a project credit of maximum € 60,000 , starting at 1 October of the year of the funding decision. The project takes two years, but the budget is available for three years.
- The involved CELSA Partners will provide their involved researcher likewise with a project budget of maximum € 30,000, starting at 1 October of the year of the funding decision, for a period of two years. The CELSA Partners' usual practices and procedures apply.

### 9.2. Eligible costs

What can be funded in a CELSA project?

- It is up to the consortium of researchers to decide what should be funded (this is subject to the evaluation procedure, cfr. supra).
- The internal rules of each involved CELSA Partner regarding funding research apply.

---

<sup>3</sup> KU Leuven is bound to report the projects funded via internal funds to the Flemish Government, and to include the non-confidential abstract in the Flemish database of research projects (FRIS Research portal)

- The CELSA Partners cannot appoint staff at another CELSA Partner. However, travel & subsistence costs of the team members in the project can be covered by either side of the 'joint' budget.
- The CELSA Partner who paid for project equipment remains the owner of that equipment. It is up to the individual CELSA Partners to make arrangements to enable the use of the equipment or available infrastructure by all relevant team members (subject to the evaluation process, cfr. supra).

## 10. Reporting

### 10.1. Reporting during the project period

No intermediate reporting is required.

### 10.2. Reporting after the end of the project

A single concise report will be submitted by the participating researchers one year after the end of the project (end of September of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year after the start of the project). This document (max. 3 pages), based on an available template, will contain e.g. publications, the progress made regarding other projects applications, and a short financial report (who is financed, what exchange has taken place).

Successful applicants have to add the abstract (or any other proof of the submission) of the submitted application and call identifier of the pan-European competitive funding program to the report.

These reports have to be send to: [contact@celsalliance.eu](mailto:contact@celsalliance.eu)

## 11. Ownership of Results

Main principle: Results are owned by the CELSA Partner who employs the researcher that generates the results.

'Results' means any (tangible or intangible) output of the action such as data, knowledge or information – whatever its form or nature, whether it can be protected or not – that is generated in the action, as any rights attached to it, including intellectual property rights.

Two or more CELSA Partners own results jointly (*'joint owners'*) if:

- they have jointly generated them and
- it is not possible to:
  - o establish the respective contribution of each project partner, or
  - o separate them for the purpose of applying for, obtaining or maintaining their protection.

The joint owners must agree (in writing, e.g. in a project partnership agreement) on the allocation and terms of exercise of their joint ownership.

Unless otherwise agreed in the joint ownership agreement, each joint owner may grant non-exclusive licences to third parties to exploit jointly-owned results (without any rights to sublicense), if the other joint owners are given:

- at least 45 days advance notice and
- fair and reasonable compensation.

Once the results have been generated, joint owners may agree (in writing, e.g. in a partnership agreement for the individual project) to apply another regime than joint ownership.

## 12. Dissemination of results

Prior notice of any planned publication shall be given to the researchers from the other CELSA Partners involved in the project, at least 45 calendar days before the publication.

Any objection to the planned publication shall be made in writing to the other involved CELSA Partners proposing the dissemination within 30 calendar days after receipt of the notice. If no objection is made within the time stated above, the publication is permitted.

An objection is justified if

- the protection of the objecting CELSA Partner's Results or Background would be adversely affected, or
- the objecting CELSA Partner's legitimate interests in relation to the Results or Background would be significantly harmed.

The objection has to include a precise request for necessary modifications.

If an objection has been raised, the involved CELSA Partners shall discuss how to overcome the justified grounds for the objection on an timely basis and the objecting CELSA Partner shall not unreasonably continue the opposition.

A CELSA Partner shall not include in any dissemination activity another CELSA Partner's Results or Background without obtaining the owning CELSA Partner's prior written approval, unless they are already published.

## 13. Access Rights

'Access Rights' means rights to use results or background under the terms and conditions in the project.

'Background' means any data, know-how or information – whatever its form or nature (tangible or intangible), including rights such as intellectual property rights that:

- is held by the project partners before they accede to the project, and
- is strictly related to and needed to implement the action or the results.



### *‘Needed’*

The researchers in a project funded by the Fund must give each other access – under fair and reasonable conditions – to background needed for exploiting their own results, unless the researcher in the project that holds the background has – before acceding to the project – informed the other researchers in the project that access to its background is subject to legal restrictions or limits, including those imposed by the rights of third parties (including personnel).

Anything not identified in an annex to the project proposal or in a partnership agreement between the individual project’s researchers shall not be object of Access Rights obligations regarding Background.

Access Rights are granted on a non-exclusive basis.

Results and Background shall be used only for the purposes for which Access Rights to it have been granted.

All requests for Access Rights shall be made in writing. The granting of Access Rights may be made conditional on the acceptance of specific conditions aimed at ensuring that these rights will be used only for the intended purpose and that appropriate confidentiality obligations are in place.

The requesting CELSA Partner must show that the Access Rights are Needed.

Access Rights to Results and Background Needed for the performance of the own work of a CELSA Partner under the Project shall be granted on a royalty-free basis.

## 14. Authorship

The rules laid out in the [KU Leuven policy on authorship](#) should be followed, unless in conflict with national laws or internal regulations of CELSA Partners.

## 15. Ethics and research integrity

The researchers must carry out the project funded by the Fund in compliance with all applicable ethical principles, including the highest standards of research integrity. The CELSA Partners shall obtain any ethics committees’ advice required under national law and/or any authorization for activities raising ethical issues required under national law.

In case the CELSA Partner or a researcher thereof receives complaint regarding an infringement of Research Integrity standards in the project funded by the Fund, that CELSA Partner or its researcher will inform the other involved CELSA Partner(s).

It will be decided by mutual consent who will take the lead in the investigation. When making such arrangements, it will be an important factor whether the respondent is enrolled on the KU Leuven payroll or on the payroll of another CELSA Partner.

## 16. Specific agreements

Once a project proposal has been selected for funding, the selected researchers from the CELSA Partners shall consult with each other in order to evaluate and decide whether or not it is necessary to make additional contractual arrangements with regard/in view of the particularities of the selected

project (e.g. non-disclosure agreements, material transfer agreements, joint IP agreements, financial arrangements in case KU Leuven takes charge of the excess of the CELSA project partners,...).

## 17. Contact details

Questions on the CELSA guidelines, CELSA submission procedure, CELSA evaluation criteria and evaluation procedure: [Marian.Schoenmaekers@kuleuven.be](mailto:Marian.Schoenmaekers@kuleuven.be)

The applicants can count on the support of their EU support offices to advice and where possible assist in the preparation of a high quality European collaborative research project application. The respective contacts of the EU support officers are:

- Charles University: [adela.jiroudkova@ruk.cuni.cz](mailto:adela.jiroudkova@ruk.cuni.cz)
- Czech Technical University in Prague: [pavel.koudelak@cvut.cz](mailto:pavel.koudelak@cvut.cz)
- Eötvös Loránd University: [palyazat@kancellaria.elte.hu](mailto:palyazat@kancellaria.elte.hu)
- Budapest University of Technology and Economics: [benko.rita@bme.hu](mailto:benko.rita@bme.hu)
- University of Ljubljana: [EUpromjekti@uni-lj.si](mailto:EUpromjekti@uni-lj.si)
- Jagiellonian University of Kraków: [magdalena.jelonek@uj.edu.pl](mailto:magdalena.jelonek@uj.edu.pl)
- University of Warsaw: [Hanna.Bylicka@adm.uw.edu.pl](mailto:Hanna.Bylicka@adm.uw.edu.pl)
- KU Leuven: [EU-info@kuleuven.be](mailto:EU-info@kuleuven.be)

## 18. Changes, disputes

In case of changes to the current Charter – e.g. regarding the financial commitment, termination of the participation of a CELSA Partner to the Fund, or addition of an institution to CELSA,... – the CELSA Partners agree to submit a written request for approval of the change to the CELSA Board and, after approval by all CELSA Partners, add an amendment to the Charter.

The Charter is governed by the law of Belgium. All disputes will preferably be arranged out of court. Unclearities or questions regarding the interpretation of this Charter shall be discussed in the CELSA Board. The CELSA Partners shall endeavour to settle their disputes amicably. In case of non-compliance with what has been stipulated in this Charter, the CELSA Partners may bring legal proceedings before the competent Belgian courts.

## 19. Protection of personal data

The CELSA Partners agree to create conditions for the protection of personal data in compliance with and within the scope of Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016, and to arrange for relevant technical measures to safeguard such data.

## 20. Signatures

This Charter may be executed in 10 counterparts, each of which shall be deemed an original and all of which shall constitute one and the same instrument, and shall become effective when counterparts have been signed by all 10 of the CELSA Partners and delivered to the other CELSA Partners; it being understood that all CELSA Partners need not to sign the same counterparts. In witness where of duly authorized representatives of the CELSA Partners have entered into this Charter as of the date last written below.

KU Leuven

Ondertekend door:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Luc Sels". The signature is written in a cursive style. A blue bracket is drawn to the left of the signature, connecting it to the "Ondertekend door:" label above and the "Signature:" label below.

Signature: .....EBF085C0FC71475.....

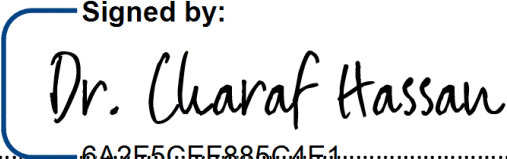
Name: Prof. Luc Sels

Title: Rector

10 juli 2025 | 10:33 CEST  
Date: .....

**Budapest University of Technology and Economics**

Signed by:

A blue bracket-shaped line frames the signature.

Signature: .....6A2F5CEf885C4E1.....

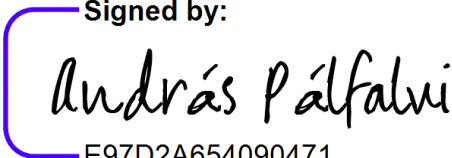
Name: Prof. Hassan Charaf

Title: Rector

13 July 2025 | 23:41 CEST

Date: .....

Signed by:

A blue bracket-shaped line frames the signature.

Signature: .....E97D2A654090471.....

Name: Prof. Miklós Verseghi-Nagy

Title: Chancellor

02 július 2025 | 13:56 CEST

Date: .....

Charles University

Signed by:

Milena Králíčková

Signature: .....8647F8E93C1C425:.....

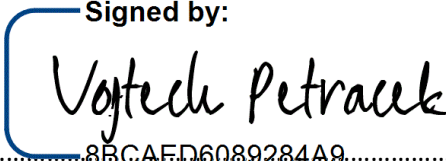
Name: Prof. Milena Králíčková

Title: Rector

02 července 2025 | 16:15 CEST  
Date: .....

Czech Technical University in Prague

Signed by:



Signature: .....8BCAED6089284A9.....

Name: doc. RNDr. Vojtěch Petráček


Title: Rector

22 July 2025 | 09:56 CEST

Date: .....

**Eötvös Loránd University**

**Signed by:**



Signature: .....79EDABCDD6774E6.....

Name: Prof. László Borhy

Title: Rector

02 július 2025 | 12:21 CEST

Date: .....

University of Ljubljana

DocuSigned by:

Gregor Majdič

Signature: .....FD1DC708251B4F7...

Name: Prof. Gregor Majdič

Title: Rector

07 July 2025 | 06:50 CEST

Date: .....



The Jagiellonian University in Kraków

Signed by:

Piotr Jedynak

Signature: .....31339D42DC4148E...

Name: Prof. Piotr Jedynak

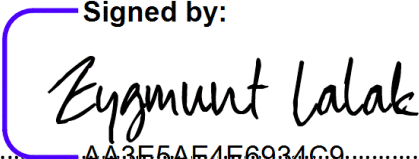
Title: Rector

29 lipca 2025 | 15:05 CEST

Date: .....

University of Warsaw

Signed by:



Signature: .....AA3E5AE4E6934C9.....

Name: Prof. Alojzy Z. Nowak

Title: Rector

23 lipca 2025 | 13:43 CEST  
Date: .....