ARQUS RESEARCH INITIATIVE

1. Objectives

The overall aim of the Arqus Research Initiative is to **support the initiation of long-term collaborative research activities among the partners of the Arqus alliance**. The call is open to **all academic disciplines** and has a strong focus on the engagement of **early-career researchers (ESR).** While proposals should align with the three Arqus research topics (Climate change and environmental sustainability, Artificial intelligence and digital transformation, European identity and heritage), we encourage ideas that can grow into larger collaborations across scientific domains.

Associated partners can participate by contributing to co-financing with their own resources. Involving external research groups (outside Arqus) is encouraged to promote collaboration although costs cannot be covered by the Arqus Research Initiative budget.

2. Activities

The call is open to all kinds of collaborative research activities leading to the overall aim of promoting long-term collaboration.

A non-exhaustive list of activities includes the following:

- Small-scale research projects
- Organisation of research and/or advanced educational seminars and/or winter or summer schools
- Organisation of PhD workshops or other joint doctoral activity
- Mobility of small teams (2-3 persons, preferably including one ESR) to ensure implementation of collaborative activity
- Development of research teams with a view to e.g. preparing joint proposals for external funding or joint publications

It is recommended to propose activities that cannot be funded by the Erasmus+ programme.

The funded grants will be implemented over a period of 18 months, starting from July 2025.

3. Eligibility

The Arqus Research Initiative provides financial support for initiatives or projects involving a **minimum of three institutions** within the Alliance (including associated partners). The participation of early-career researchers in each participating partner university is strongly recommended. In addition, the creation of interdisciplinary research teams is encouraged.

For this Call, early-career researchers are defined as individuals in PhD studies or holding a doctoral degree in any discipline who are actively engaged in research but have not yet achieved

full independence. Applicants should articulate how their career stage aligns with this category, recognizing diverse academic pathways.

Applications should ensure that EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) policies are contemplated in both the composition of teams and the implementation of activities (gender balance, accessibility...).

4. Application process

All applications must be submitted by the leading institution via email to: research-calls@arqus-alliance.eu. The template of the application (Annex 1) provides detailed guidelines for submission. The application form must be completed in English.

Application deadline: 23 May 2025.

5. Funding and financial procedures

The total budget for the 2025 call for proposals is **100,000 EUR** and each project team may benefit from a grant of between **5,000 and 30,000 EUR.** The transfers of grants to successful projects will be carried out at the start of the project.

The following costs are considered eligible:

- Travel costs, accommodation and daily allowance (via the use of lump sums)
- Costs for events (small fee for a venue, organization, coffee break,...)
- Costs for communications purposes (creation of visual materials, printing costs...)
- Subcontracting costs (NB local procurement regulations will apply)
- Purchase of consumables for research activities (NB local procurement regulations will apply)
- Open access publications (payment and publication within the timeframe of the project)

Permanent staff costs are not eligible whereas **temporary staff** costs for specific tasks may be funded.

6. Evaluation of applications

Proposals will be submitted and evaluated in a single-step process. An interdisciplinary academic selection committee consisting of members of all Arqus universities will rank proposals for funding on a competitive basis. The selection committee will be asked to appoint a chair and vice-chair and will organize its own selection meetings. Following the committee's proposal, the final decision on the allocation of funds will be made by the Research Board.

Proposals will be evaluated taking into account the following criteria:

Quality (50 points)

• Quality, clearly formulated plan, budget and goals of the envisaged project

• Scientific relevance and interdisciplinary approach

• Strength of the team, including engagement of early-career researchers

• The extent to which diversity, equality and inclusion are taken into consideration in the project

Impact (50 points)

• The extent to which the project impacts the broad Arqus partnership (number of partners involved, number of researchers involved, involvement of professional staff and student, sustainability, …)

• Capacity to involve external stakeholders and attract external funding in the long term

• The relevance of the project to one of the three Arqus research topics (Climate change and environmental sustainability, Artificial intelligence and digital transformation, European identity and heritage).

7. Calendar

Publication of call: April 2025

Deadline for submission of proposals: 23 May 2025

Publication of final results (after approval of the Research Board): 15 June 2025

Funding transferred: end of June.

Implementation period: until December 2026

8. Applicant appealing policy

An appeal against the funding decision of a grant application may be submitted only if there is an alleged error or deviation from the established procedure (e.g., an undisclosed conflict of interest by a reviewer or improper handling of the application). The appeal must be filed within 5 days of receiving the application evaluation.

9. Obligations

Beneficiaries are generally expected to actively engage in communication activities, to promote the projects and to publicly acknowledge the Arqus support on all materials and in all publications. Events and major outputs will be published on Arqus website.

The beneficiaries will submit a scientific report every 6 months to the Research Board, providing the description of the progress made towards the proposed objectives. The final report should contain the budgetary allocations and highlight the progress achieved, emphasizing how the collaborative work will paved the way for future joint funding opportunities.