



Deliverable 3.5 EPICUR Concept Paper

European Partnership for an Innovative Campus Unifying Regions
EPICUR Research Agenda
Shaping European Society in Transition

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1. Abstract

This concept note defines the purpose and action plan for the establishment of a research residency prototype (EPICluster) and the residency will serve as a test run in order to determine its feasibility. EPIClusters are collaborative projects furthering international cooperation among researchers and professionals outside of academia meant to tackle scientific and societal challenges and designed to support early career researchers in putting new ideas into action. EPIClusters offer tailor-made experiences at one of the partner universities for scholars, thinkers, and experts alike from both academic and non-academia, and serve as a network for scientific exploration and ideas spanning the Alliance. EPIClusters also serve as a first collaborative experience in an early career researcher's professional life and provide EPICUR Fellows with the opportunity to complete a European research project.

The EPICluster concept faces financial challenges due to the unclear distribution of the kick-off budget. Details on implementation challenges are described in Annex A. A budget mock-up is proposed for reference in Annex B.

a) Fact Sheet

Name of the program: EPICluster

Type of the program: Research Residency

Target Group: Early Career Researchers

Participants: Groups of minimum 5 participants

Duration: 30-180 days

Location: Hybrid

Budget per group: up to 150,000.000 €

Call for Applications goes live on: November 10, 2022

Call for Applications closes on: February 28, 2023, at 23:59 Brussels time

End of the program (closing event): November 10, 2023

b) Definitions

"EPICluster" is a collaborative project furthering international cooperation among researchers and professionals outside of academia meant to tackle scientific and societal challenges, and designed to support early career researchers in putting new ideas into action;

"Host University" refers to the EPICUR partner university responsible for hosting (physically or virtually) the EPICUR Fellows for the duration of their EPICluster. The Host University is responsible for managing the EPICluster funds according to the EPICluster pre-approved budget plan;

"Research Infrastructure" refers to the definition proposed in D3.2.

Participants of an EPICluster become **"EPICUR Fellows"**. Please see deliverable 3.2 for more details.

2. Program Goals and Conceptual Aspects

The following aspects are developed with the precarious conditions of early career researchers in mind. During several discussions with our target group, as part of WP1-R activities, it became clear that considering the life and career circumstances of early career researchers will require us to create a format that equally offers enough flexibility in terms of timing as well as enough plannability to become attractive and useful to our target group.

Conceptually, an EPICCluster fulfils the following main objectives:

- to welcome early career researchers in hybrid residencies with the unique opportunity to run interdisciplinary research projects in theory and application;
- to foster new research methods by encouraging the use of transversal skills;
- to produce and transfer results through setting up an open, scholarly program that yet aims at broader audiences and the complex challenges faced by European/global society;
- to shape future academic careers while ensuring that every participant receives continuous supervision and guidance from both the Host University and EPICUR;
- to offer early career researchers with concrete perspectives by the end of the residency, whether early career researchers learn how to manage a research project funded by the European Union, intend to pursue their research with others European grants or funding solutions, or generate scientific results;
- to establish long-term cooperation between academia and the rest of society to develop more sustainable strategies education and training, research, and innovation, in the service of/to society, formally known as the European Knowledge Square¹.

a) Organizational Aspects: Key Elements of the Program

Designed to be flexible, hybrid, and dynamic, EPICClusters will pursue EPICUR's goal of a more sustainable cooperation between its partner institutions by furthering a hybrid mobility model, where EPICUR universities ecosystems become mobile, and all program participants can benefit from this internationalization. This will require an identification of shareable resources (task 3.1), a development of joint strategies to take action (task 3.2), and incentives to engage in EPICUR-Research other formats (EPICommunity).

EPICUR Fellows may choose the arrangement of these components according to their project's specific needs.

- Residency: Fellows may choose to conduct their residency entirely in-person, virtually, or through a hybrid model based on their projects and their needs. This flexible structure allows researchers to access infrastructures and to collaborate at a local or global level.
- Research Milestones: Groups make progress during their residency by reaching specific research targets, such as accessing specific research infrastructures or defining an interdisciplinary framework.
- Science with and for Society: Groups actively collaborate with non-academic experts through various channels. These experts may take an active part in the research activities of an EPICCluster as a permanent group member; they may also be invited to collaborate with Fellows during citizen science workshops/events; or they may uplift ECRs' careers through a mentor-mentee relationship.

¹ A concept understood as the junction of four core domains: education, research, innovation, and service to society – Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on achieving the European Education Area by 2025. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0625&rid=4>

- Mentorship: EPICUR Fellows receive support from both an academic mentor and a non-academic mentor. This mentorship opportunity aims at uplifting early career researchers and providing them with tools to become successful drivers of innovation and change.

b) EPICUR Residencies: Putting inter-and/or transdisciplinary research into action

EPIClusters encourage international, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary mobility. While physical mobility remains a significant component of the EPICluster Program, EPICUR-Research encourages early career researchers and participating experts to take the lead in avoiding unnecessary travel, in the use of EPICommunity as an online collaboration tool, and in reducing their carbon emissions in a way that sets a positive example to others within the research community. EPICUR Fellows will therefore be invited to create a profile on EPICommunity and use it as need be.

EPIClusters are therefore designed as flexible, hybrid residencies, meaning that EPICUR Fellows will choose whether they will conduct their work through virtual means or to regularly meet at a location of their choosing at the host university. This format is designed to allow for early career researchers originating from various universities to contribute to an EPICluster with various degrees of involvement, as some early career researchers may or may not be allowed to spend more than a certain period away from their designated research unit. Applicants will need to reflect on their workload in their application (work plan) alongside their intended budget, which will address expenses related to research infrastructures, equipment, travel and lodging.

Example:

Johannes, Lauren, Szymon, Zoe, and Anna wish to apply for a 60-day EPICluster. Their hybrid collaboration would be:

- Johannes, virtual collaboration only
- Lauren, hybrid (15 days in-person)
- Szymon, hybrid (7 days in-person)
- Zoe, in person
- Anna, hybrid (35 days in-person)

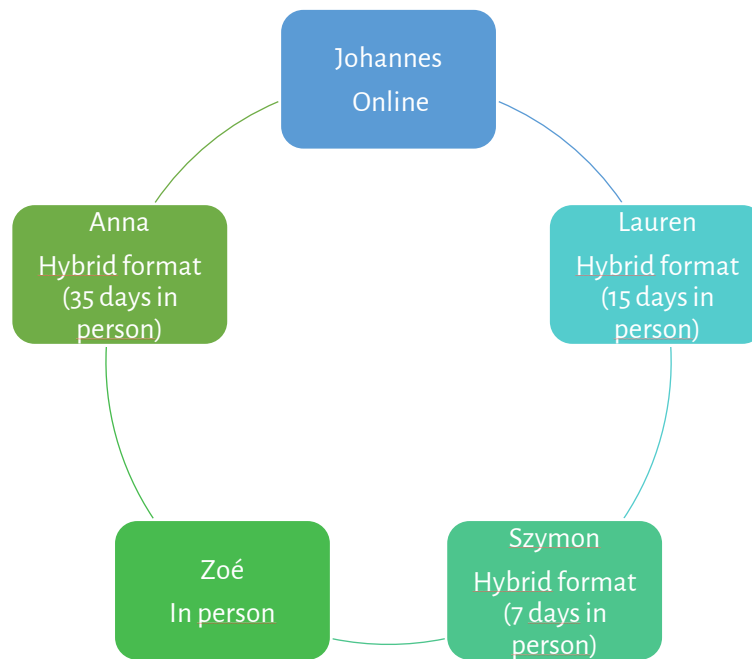


Figure 1: EPICluster Hybrid Format

Each EPICluster will be working on topics related to at least one EPIChallenge. Research activities led during an EPICluster should be interdisciplinary, meaning that researchers “integrate information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts, and/or theories from two or more disciplines or bodies of specialized knowledge to advance fundamental understanding or to solve problems whose solutions are beyond the scope of a single discipline or area of research practice.”² Program participants interact and work collaboratively, with the possibility to access libraries and research infrastructures from any EPICUR partner university.

Example:

Johannes, Lauren, Szymon, Zoe, and Anna’s wish to choose UNISTRA as a Host University. If successful, they may access UNISTRA’s research infrastructures (provided access fees are paid, if any, and security clearance is given) as well as a specific research infrastructure at one or more partner universities. Lauren and Anna are interested in accessing a research infrastructure at BOKU for a duration of 3 days, and another one at AUTH for a duration of 7 days.

² National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, and Institute of Medicine. 2005. *Facilitating Interdisciplinary Research*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/11153>.

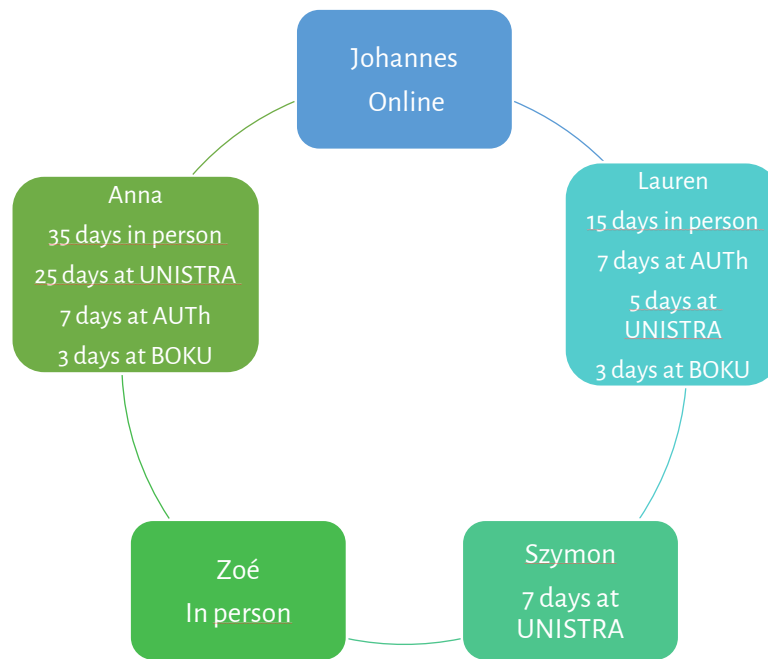


Figure 2: Research Infrastructures and in-person mobility

On transdisciplinary research, EPICUR Fellows will collaborate with external professionals in the framework of Open Innovation procedures, tackling societal challenges that exist at the interfaces of multiple fields by merging these diverse areas of expertise in a network of partnerships. External professionals will support EPICUR Fellows with their skills and competencies, stimulate the exchange of knowledge and expertise, and contribute to the overall transdisciplinary EPICUR ecosystem.

Example:

Johannes, Lauren, Szymon, Zoe, and Anna wish to collaborate with a World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) professional, a European Parliament representative, and an expert from Nestlé S.A. All three professionals would be invited to collaborate through virtual ways or in-person at the Host University. Accommodation and travel allowances would need to be taken into consideration in the budget plan if need be.

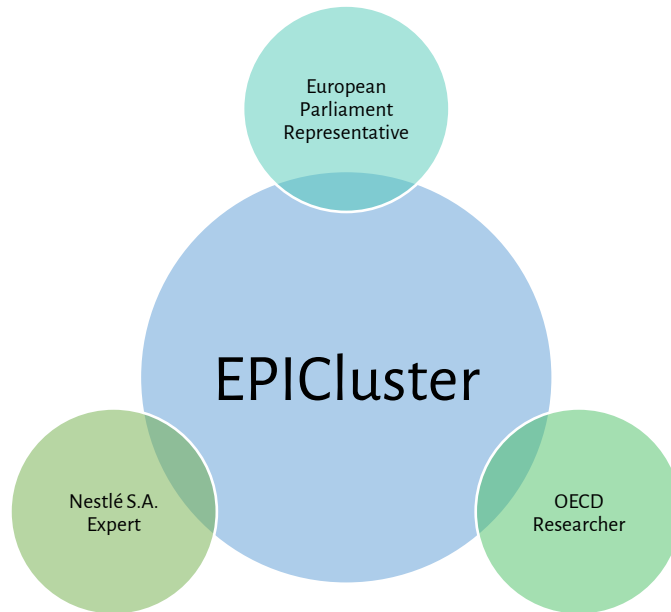


Figure 3: Integration of non-academic partners in the EPICCluster

c) Research Milestones

Milestones act as a framework to guide EPICUR Fellows along the way of their residency. They are control points in the residency that help to chart progress, to learn research tools and methodologies, and may make way for the next phase of work to begin. These steps also serve as indicators of the overall success or failure of an EPICCluster and are regularly discussed between program participants and their mentors.

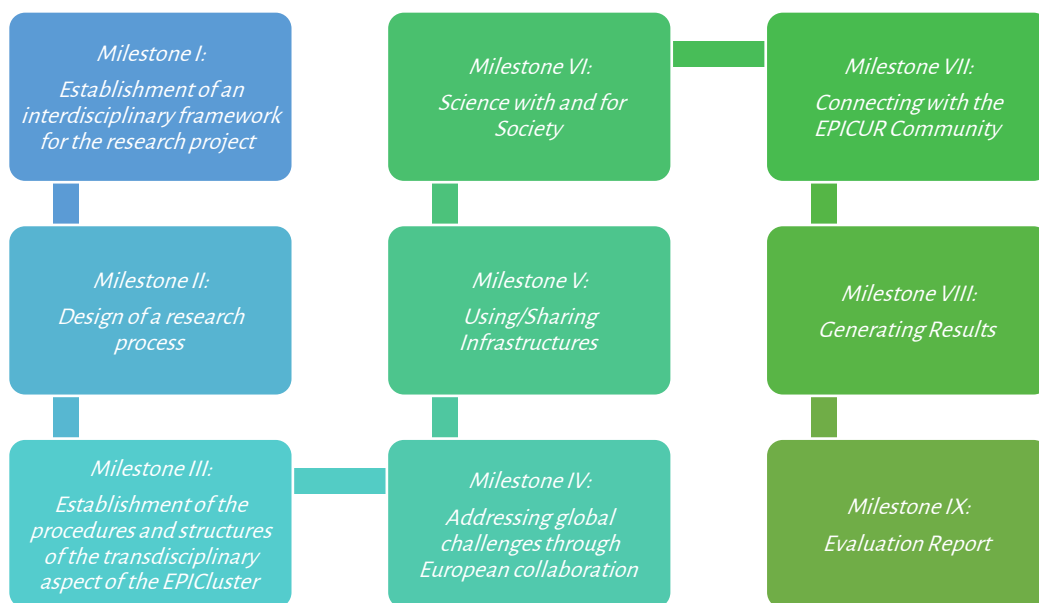


Figure 4: Research Milestones

Milestone I: Establishment of an interdisciplinary framework for the research project

Each group of EPICUR Fellows will have to develop a functional interdisciplinary framework that unites the complimentary strength of the disciplines represented in the group and forms a basis for the explorative / empirical work of the EPICluster.

Milestone II: Design of a research process

Each group of EPICUR Fellows will have to write and discuss a research plan. This document will clarify how to approach the project, touching upon research goals, EPIChallenges, selected methodologies, types of non-academic events and/or partnerships, tools, timeline, and locations. This planning activity will help maximize the participants' efforts and model their activities according to the specific research purpose.

Milestone III: Establishment of the procedures and structures of the transdisciplinary aspect of the EPICluster

Each group of EPICUR Fellows will have to identify fitting non-university partners and create / develop the appropriate structures and procedures that benefit the collaboration and ensure that exchanges are reciprocal.

Milestone IV: Addressing global challenges through European collaboration

Each group will define their challenge-based approach by building a system/stakeholder map pooling research and innovation activities carried out at each EPICUR University and EPICUR partner to be explored by the research project.

Milestone V: Using/Sharing Infrastructures

Each group will demonstrate exemplary experiences from working in or using research infrastructures and explore whether research infrastructures can be used to deepen inter-and transdisciplinary collaboration on challenge-based research.

Milestone VI: Science with and for Society

EPICUR Fellows will present preliminary results/outputs from co-designing and co-conducting a research project together with non-academic third parties such as business, governmental agencies, civil society organizations, and research infrastructures.

Milestone VII: Connecting with the EPICUR Community

Each group of EPICUR Fellows will connect with the EPICUR Community-at-large as guest speakers in EPICamps or participate in other relevant formats, offer perspectives on inter-and transdisciplinary research, and establish continuity on the overall EPICUR Pathway to Research. They will be invited to create profiles on the upcoming EPICommunity platform and use it as a virtual tool as needed.

Milestone VIII: Generating Results

Each group will be able to generate some results based on the milestones. These results may be preliminary by nature and need further development through other grants and programs or may be presented as a fully-fledged prototype ready to be presented.

Milestone IX: Evaluation Report

At the end of the program, each group will share with their mentors and EPICUR-Research staff members a reflective report to assess their personal and professional growth during the program.

d) Building sustainable academic careers: Guidance and Supervision in EPIClusters

EPICUR-Research is dedicated to enhancing research careers in the European research ecosystem. To do so, it develops a new assessment framework and virtual networking tools. **The EPIClusters will contribute an additional feature in testing how guidance and supervision can be rethought by developing a mentoring program, in which senior researchers and non-academic experts share their wisdom and experiences with emerging scholars.** Rather than reinforcing former patterns of supervision, the mentoring program in EPICluster will serve to empower the EPICUR Fellows and guide them along their way into interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research.

EPICUR Fellows will receive ongoing support and guidance from two mentors, one from the EPICUR Alliance, and another from a non-academic stakeholder. Recognized as experts in their field of work, mentors will share their experience to help develop the next generation of European researchers and innovators. Mentors will meet with the program participants to discuss their research progress, as well as any challenges they have encountered. Their tasks include:

- jointly designing a feasible work plan with the participants, including an assessment of the participant's goals, strengths, and weaknesses;
- monitoring participants' research progress and giving constructive feedback in regular meetings;
- offering advice and support to the participants as needed.

Incentives for the mentors include:

- ongoing mentor research referenced in mentees' future works, providing an opportunity for mentors for their research to be cited in the future;
- lifelong co-publishing opportunities with mentees once young researchers establish more expertise in their fields;
- exposure of work to fresh markets, diverse audiences, new readers and diverse countries;
- benefit from mentees serving as resources for information on conferences and networking opportunities;
- enjoy entryways to new markets and opportunities for employment, full time as well as part time through summer courses or occasionally through visiting fellowships or teaching posts;
- expand into transdisciplinary pathways as mentees enter private or public markets, linking mentor research outside the sphere of academia.

Mentors should originate from diverse backgrounds and have an interest in supporting future researchers and their professional growth and possess strong interpersonal and communication skills, as well as familiarity with the fields and areas of research relevant to the EPIClusters, as well as relevant transdisciplinary experience. UNISTRA will oversee the onboarding of mentors based on mentors' résumés, connection to the project, and the previously mentioned criteria. Mentors and mentees will be matched by the selection committee based on their area of expertise and the mentorship preferences indicated in the project application form.

Please refer to Annex C: Mentorship Handbook for more details.

e) Science with and for Society

EPIClusters are committed to fostering new research methods, encouraging the use of transversal skills, and setting up an open, scientific, and cultural program where various fields; including the arts, science, and technology, all thrive as interrelated, mutually informing modes of exploration, knowledge, and discovery. To do so, residencies will facilitate and create opportunities for EPICUR Fellows to collaborate with academic and non-academic interested third parties on new forms of narration and expression relevant to the EPICUR community. EPICUR residencies will support early career researchers in finding alternate ways of scholarly writing that fully reflect their approach, learning from scientists who experiment, and create with the actors of the cultural industry, becoming fully involved drivers in societal changes

Three modules encompass the community outreach aspect of this program:

- An introductory session during which the EPICUR Fellows will meet with their mentors for the first time and have the opportunity to exchange with scholars recognized for their work outside of academia
- At least one “Open Science Day” which will facilitate exchanges between project participants, prospective applicants, and interested third parties (industry, schools, EPICUR universities, artists, etc.)
- A closing session during which Fellows will reflect on the work they’ve achieved, meet with their mentors for a last session, and pitch their project or results to producers, publishers, businesses, and other relevant third parties.

UNISTRA, as WP Lead, is responsible for organizing the following:

- **Program Launch:** A welcome event to learn about key academic resources within the alliance. Fellows meet independently with their mentors for the first time and decide on future proceedings, according to the mentorship structure. Fellows also meet with scholars and scientists that have already expanded their research outside of academia. Examples of such work include filming their fieldwork, transposing a survey into drawings, or using dramaturgy as a new way to narrate their research.
- **Closing Event:** Fellows reflect on the work they have achieved and provide feedback to EPICUR staff members through surveys and questionnaires and meet with their mentors for a last session. Fellows are invited to showcase their work and pitch their project and/or results to a floor of cultural producers, publishers, businesses, and other relevant third parties.

Host universities may organize the following events, funds permitting:

- **Open Science Day(s):** Open Science Day(s) serve as a springboard between project participants, EPICUR members (students, teachers, early career researchers, and staff), prospective applicants, and interested third parties (industry, schools, governments, NGOs, non-EPICUR universities, artists, etc.). The format of this event is left to the host university’s discretion, keeping in mind that Open Science Day(s) should serve as a promotional tool for both EPICUR and EPICluster

participants. Events could range from presenting science development through “Science in the Making” events, furthering collaboration with global creators and thinkers such as science-backed performances and hackathons³, to exploiting the EPICCluster’s results through workshops, pitching, or marketing. There may be one or more Open Science Day organized by the host institution.

3. Application and Selection Process

The EPICCluster selection process is a **2-step process** with an eligibility check followed by an interview with a selection committee. Applications are received on a rolling basis from November 10, 2022, until February 28, 2023, at 23:59 Brussels time. Once applications are reviewed and ranked by the selection committee, WP3-Lead informs candidates in writing of whether they have been accepted for the residency.

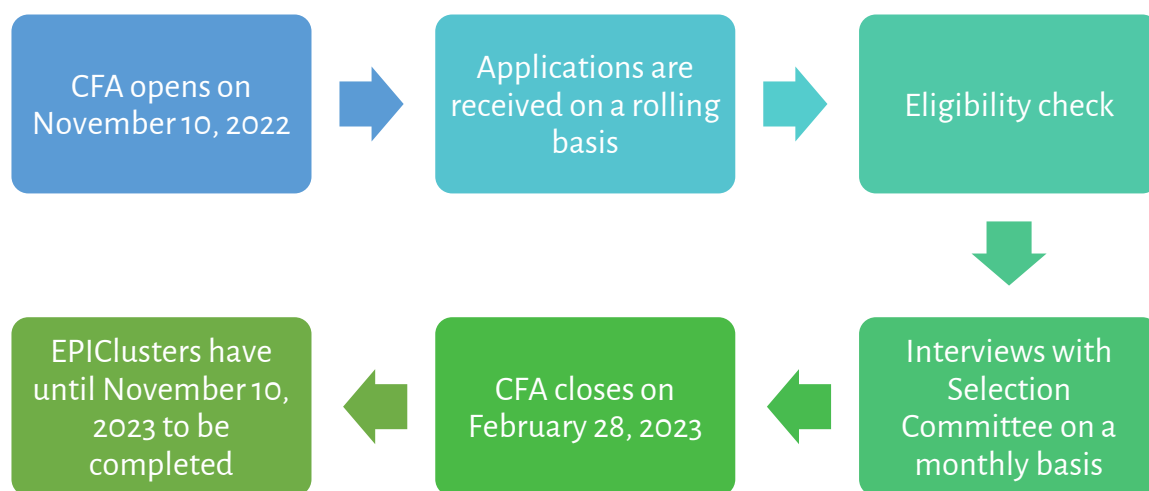


Figure 5: EPICCluster Selection Procedure

a) Application Procedure

Applications are submitted online and are pre-selective by the following hard-eligibility criteria:

- Applications will have to be submitted by a group of minimum 5 members;
- Applicants must identify as Early Career Researchers, as defined by EPICUR-Research. Up to a third of applicants may be affiliated with non-EPICUR or non-university institutions;
- Applicants must come from at least 3 different EPICUR universities. Applicants are invited to take geographical balance into consideration when assembling their team;⁴

³ The Grant Agreement mentions the possibility to develop hackathons as a promotional tool for ongoing research (“EPIClimathons”), and the Open Science Days may serve as such for the implementation of this program.

⁴ Although teams with researchers affiliated to Alsace/Baden-Württemberg universities only are free to apply to the program, applicants will be strongly encouraged to create teams with researchers from other partner universities.

- Applicants must declare whether:
 - They are involved in EPICUR and / or get paid as EPICUR Project staff;
 - They have been involved neither in the conceptualization nor the selection processes of EPIClusters

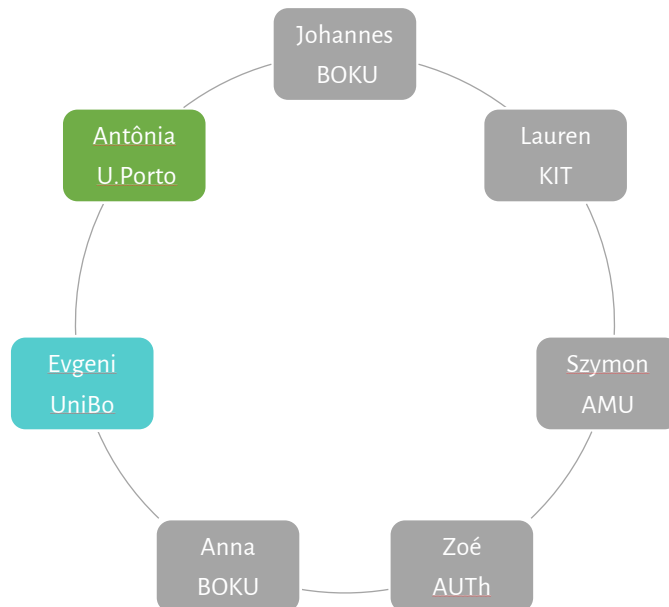


Figure 6: Up to a third of applicants may be affiliated with non-EPICUR or non-university institutions

The application should be in English, and the project description should not exceed 10,000 characters, including spaces. The application should include the following:

- Project applicants with affiliation and contact info
- Europass Résumé
- Choice of the EPICUR member university serving as a host for the project (3 max., to be ranked according to the applicants' preferences)
- Approbation notices from supervisor (if relevant)
- Relevant EPIChallenge that the project addresses
- Desired start and end dates of the project (1 to 6 months)
- A short summary describing the project. This summary should be written in a non-scholarly way of writing and accessible to most readers. Up to 1,500 characters including spaces.

Appendices should be submitted as a single PDF file and give a full description of the project (up to 10,000 characters including spaces):

- research fields
- research experience and interests of all group members (biographic abstracts) showing where they intersect and complement each other (group characteristics, interdisciplinary connections of the project)
- work plan (time schedule)

- potential for innovation, originality and relevance of the project in relation to a contribution to at least one of the predefined EPICChallenges (for 2021-23: Mobility, Migration, Identity / Sustainability Research / Transition of Public Health)
- potential for transdisciplinary work, listing non-university / non-academic partners with whom they hope to collaborate
- planning of the requested funding
- envisioned outputs (publications, conference, project proposals etc.)

b) Selection Procedure

A selection committee consisting of 2 ECR Board Members and 8 Researchers review all applicants, select applicants for interview, and participate in the interview process and in the final choice of applicants. Each partner university nominates researchers based on familiarity with interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary work, project evaluation and management experience, as well as familiarity with the fields and areas of research relevant to the EPICChallenges. The selection committee will meet on March 2023.

Selection Committee March 2023	ECR Board Members 2 members nominated by ECR Board
	Researchers 8 Researchers nominated by partner universities
	Non-Academic Partner 1 External Expert

Figure 7: Selection Committee

Applicants are selected on the basis of relevant project characteristics:

- originality, innovative character and societal relevant of the proposed research project;
- scientific quality and adherence to the challenge-based approach;
- high degree of inter-and-transdisciplinary approaches within the proposal;
- potential for outputs (fundability, advancement of the researchers, etc.) as well as dissemination and reception by civil society.

Each criterion should be evaluated with the following qualitative assessments: “insufficient”, “fair”, “good”, “very good”, and “excellent”.

The selection committee invites selected candidates for an individual interview. Applicants will be notified of their selection for interview by email and will set up an interview day with WP3-Lead.

The selection committee is responsible for the final ranking of candidates and will be asked to give a written assessment on the research proposals. Gender balance, geographical balance and diversity should also be taken into consideration when ranking groups. The written assessment should explain the procedure followed; the criteria used to determine successful applications.

Both applications and selection committee ranking will be submitted to the Steering Committee for final approval. WP3 Lead will eventually inform successful candidates in writing of their application outcome. If the offer is accepted, non-EU citizens may have to apply for a visa. The international office of the host university can offer support for the program participants in this matter.

4. Financial Aspects

a) EPICUR-Research kick-off funding and the Role of Host Universities

EPIClusters are funded by EPICUR-Research kick-off funding. This budget allows “for covering costs of experts, (online) meetings, travel (if and when necessary), joint development of research design and implementation.”⁵ Every partner contributes to the kick-off funding with the equivalent of 13 person months which also serve for the employment of policy and management staff.

A Host University is responsible for the aforementioned local fees, meaning that researcher mobility and costs related to accommodation, daily subsistence, and travel are paid by the Host University. Access to and related training to local research infrastructures are also paid by the Host University, whereas non-host universities are responsible for paying their own, local research infrastructures related fees. The Host University is also responsible for offering access to workspaces and office supplies.

Example: Researchers choose KIT as a Host University for their EPICluster and intend to access research infrastructures located at AMU, UvA, and UHA. KIT will be responsible for paying daily subsistence, accommodation, and travel allowances, implication of experts, mentor fees, Science with and for Society related fees, as well as miscellaneous fees. AMU, UvA, and UHA are responsible for paying their local research infrastructures fees.

⁵ Grant Agreement, page 130.

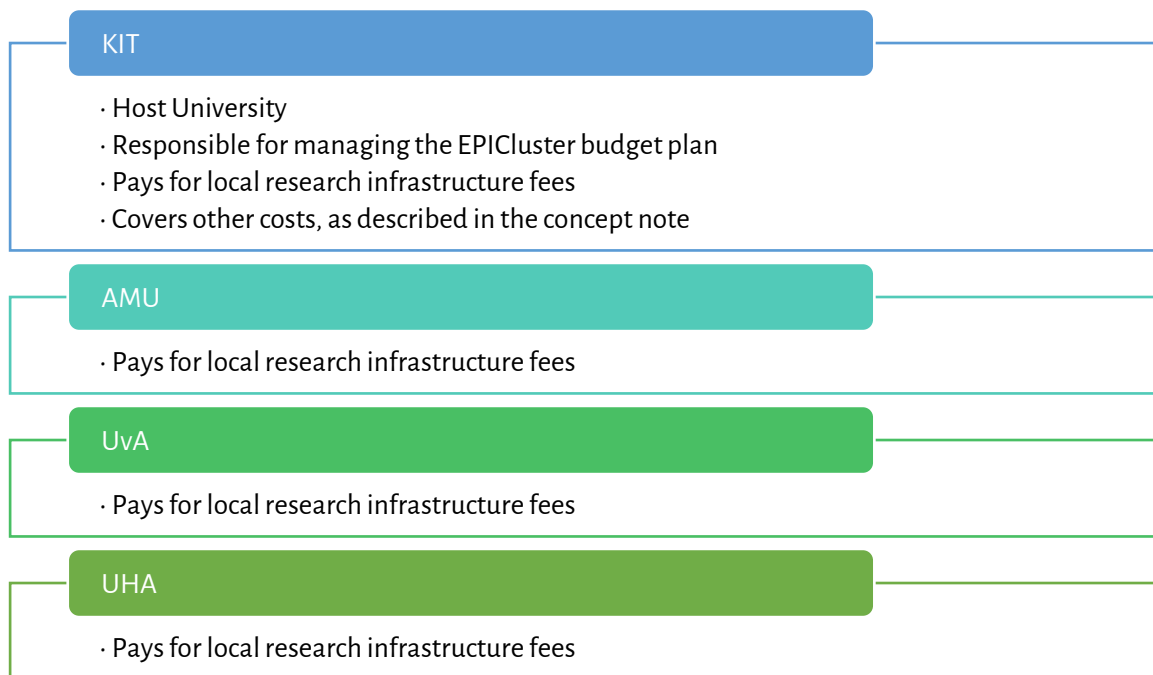


Figure 8: Financial responsibility in regards to research infrastructure access

a) Spending Guidelines

Applicants are invited to submit a budget plan with their application (please refer to Annex B for a detailed example). This budget plan may be used and divided among them as it best suits their needs. Access to research infrastructures may be subject to access, training, and rental fees. National and local restrictions as to what can and cannot be financed might apply.

Eligible costs under the EPICluster program are:

- Daily subsistence allowance
- Accommodation allowance
- Travel allowance
- Research infrastructure associated fees (e.g. access or training fees)
- Allowances for involvement of experts
- Research budget (design and implementation)

The spending guidelines presented below aim to support early career researchers to fill in their budget plan. The chosen daily subsistence, accommodation, and travel allowance follow the framework provided in Article 6.2.C.1 (page 60) of the Model Grant Agreement⁶ and fixed by Decision C(2021)35. Daily rates are provided in €.

The daily subsistence allowance is a flat rate to cover all expenditure at the place where the residency is held, including meals and local transportation as well as health insurance. The flat rate for accommodation and

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/aga_en.pdf

daily subsistence allowance is foreseen per physical residency day. EPICUR Fellows planning to physically stay for more than 60 days at a host university are invited to look for accommodation with the support of the host institution services. The amount provided varies on the destination. This allowance will not be provided for days of the travel, weekend days or local official holidays. Costs exceeding these flat rates will not be covered and must be paid by the EPICUR Fellows.

EPICUR Fellows remain employed by their home institution during the EPICcluster residency. Social security coverage, employment insurance, and occupational health insurance are not provided by the Host University.

HOSTING COUNTRIES	Daily subsistence allowance	Accommodation
Austria	102	126
Denmark	124	158
France	102	166
Germany	97	119
Greece	82	107
Netherlands	103	133
Poland	67	103

Travel expenses will cover the long-distance travel between countries. Local transportation costs, in both the host country and the country of residence, must be paid with the daily subsistence allowance. Travel distances should be calculated using the Distance Calculator approved by Decision C(2021)35⁷.

TRAVEL	€
Between 10 and 99 KM:	23
Between 100 and 499 KM:	180
Between 500 and 1999 KM:	275
Between 2000 and 2999 KM:	360
Between 3000 and 3999 KM:	530
Between 4000 and 7999 KM:	820
8000 KM or more:	1500

b) Implication of experts

Non-EPICUR professionals may be invited to participate in an EPICcluster and share their expertise with the participants. The EPICcluster funds may cover costs of implication with a flat accommodation allowance of **100€** per night and a daily subsistence allowance of **92€** per day. Travel expenses follow the aforementioned rules for EPICcluster participants.

⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/procedures-guidelines-tenders/information-contractors-and-beneficiaries/calculate-unit-costs-eligible-travel-costs_en

c) Access to Research Infrastructures

Fees to access research infrastructures vary depending on each university of the alliance. Each partner university willing to be a Host University should produce a list of accessible research infrastructures and associated fees before the launch of the program. This list will be created in coordination with D3.6 “Inventory of EPICUR Infrastructures” due M24.

d) Mentor Honorarium Fee

Mentors are paid an individual honorarium fee of **2,000 €** (gross). This fee is pre-filled in the budget plan and part of total amount offered during the residency.

e) Science with and for Society activities

A small amount of the overall budget (**10,000 €**) is reserved for Science with and for Society activities. These funds should be used to organize events promoting science in the making, as described above in “Science with and for Society”.

5. Implementation Plan and Challenges

a) EPIClusters as Prototypes

The new collaborative formats EPICUR-Research seeks to develop are placed along a pathway from EPICamps to EPIClusters and envisioned EPIClusters for the remaining of the EPICUR-Research project serve as a test run in order to determine the feasibility and attractiveness of this program. The themes and participants of these “first-generation” EPIClusters may be identified and promoted in the course of this bottom-up process from EPICamps to EPIClusters through EPICradles or may be identified on an ad hoc basis. EPIClusters will need to offer better financial incentives than EPICradles and be tested across as many scientific disciplines as possible, catering to both the applied research and fundamental research scientific communities.

b) Implementation Plan

UNISTRA will share a Call for Hosts with partner universities once D3.5 is approved. Once a list of Host Universities is set, UNISTRA will work with selected universities to prepare for the Call for Applications (CFA). Prospective Host Universities will need to share a list of research infrastructures and associated fees with WP3-Lead in order to make information accessible to applicants.

The CFA will be hosted on EPICUR’s website.

The EPICluster program will launch on the World Science Day for Peace and Development (Thursday, November 10, 2022) and will run throughout 2022-2023 until the following World Science Day for Peace and Development (Friday, November 10, 2023).

The program will rely on various forms and handbooks to further its mission, namely with an application form and a budget form, a mentorship handbook (see Annex C for more details), a research plan, and an evaluation report. WP-Lead will also organize information and pitch sessions starting in Fall 2022 to further opportunities for EPICCluster matchmaking and allow teams to emerge. These events will offer info about program details, requirements, and application and selection process. UNISTRA will also build on the concept of EPICUR Talks and “EPIClimathon” mentioned in the Grant Agreement to address international cooperation and transdisciplinary research.

The Call for Applications will open November 10, 2022, and close on February 28, 2023, at 23:59 Brussels time.

c) Implementation Challenges

None of the Host Universities may currently be able to host an EPICCluster due to the proposed budget distribution approved by the Steering Committee for the project submission to the European Commission in 2020. The partners agreed to contribute 13 person months each from their share of the budget for a total amount of 428,000 € and needed for the launch and implementation of the EPICClusters. Even if partner universities were interested in hosting one or more EPICClusters, none of them would be able to do so with the current WP3 budget figures.

More details about how to address the EPICUR-Research kick-off budget challenges are available in Annex A.

6. Rights and ownership of results

Rights and ownership of results conform to Section 3 of the Grant Agreement, ensuring that EPICUR beneficiaries own the results generated during the residency, should disseminate results by all appropriate means, and must ensure open access⁸ to all peer-reviewed scientific publications relating to its results.

7. Quality Assessment and Evaluation

EPICUR Fellows will be invited to write a shared reflective report to assess their professional growth during the program. These reports will also serve as evaluation basis for the EPICCluster program. Excerpts might be used with the agreement of EPICUR Fellows for marketing purposes. These reports should contain:

- Description and reflection of the research focus, tasks, and outcomes during the residency
- Description of any challenges encountered, as well as success and progress made
- Experience with the involvement of actors from outside academia
- Experience with accessing and sharing research infrastructures
- Feedback on their cooperation with their mentors
- Advice for both EPICUR-Research staff members and future participants

WP3-Lead will evaluate the EPICCluster program in Task 3.6 (M36).

⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/strategy/strategy-2020-2024/our-digital-future/open-science_en

8. Annexes

Annex A: Implementation Challenges

The Project Management Team must take action to ensure the continuity of the EPICUR-Research activities as described in the grant agreement, notably concerning the testing and launch of the EPICluster research format prototype, guaranteeing early career researchers with access to new funding schemes.

The EPICluster research format prototype offers emerging scholars with the opportunity of “designing and conducting research and innovation projects together with representatives from civil society organisations, enterprises, cultural organisations and governmental agencies and/or be based on research infrastructures”.⁹ Such opportunities face considerable financial and administrative hurdles that prevent them from being implemented and disseminated within the whole EPICUR university network concretely in the pilot phase.

Current Challenges

Early Career Researchers may apply to an EPICluster for a funding of up to 150,000 € available in Work Package 3. None of the Host Universities (as per the concept of “Host University” developed in D3.5 EPICUR Concept Paper) would currently be able to complete the EPICluster activities due to the proposed budget distribution approved by the Steering Committee for the project submission to the European Commission in 2020. The partners agreed to contribute 13 person months each from their share of the budget for a total amount of 428,000 € and are needed for the launch and implementation of the EPIClusters. Even if partner universities were interested in hosting one or more EPIClusters, none of them would be able to do so with the current WP3 budget figures.

UNISTRA is calling the Project Management Team to reform the WP3 budget framework and redistribution so that the EPIClusters format can be successfully piloted in an efficient way. To allow partner universities to fulfil their role as Host Universities and provide the appropriate funding to the piloted EPIClusters, the 13 person months budget within WP3 would be extracted from each partner’s budget share and redistributed to the Host Universities by an amendment to the grant agreement at the end of the funding period.

PROPOSAL

1. UNISTRA proposes to redistribute the 13 person months budget dedicated to the EPIClusters within WP3 to partner universities so that they can fulfil their role as Host Universities and give the appropriate funding to the piloted EPIClusters.
2. The Steering Committee will receive a revised budget distribution table by partner for WP3 by the EPICUR-Research project coordinator (KIT).

⁹ Grant Agreement, p.87.

Annex B: Budget Mockup

Item	Unit	# of units	cost per unit	Hosting Country	total cost
1. Daily Subsistence Allowance (at Host University)					
Applicant A	day	30	102,00 €	FRA	3.060,00 €
Applicant B	day	30	102,00 €	FRA	3.060,00 €
Applicant C	day	60	102,00 €	FRA	6.120,00 €
Applicant D	day	14	102,00 €	FRA	1.428,00 €
Applicant E	day	23	102,00 €	FRA	2.346,00 €
2. Daily Subsistence Allowance (at partner university, for access to Research Infrastructure)					
Applicant A	day	5	82,00 €	GRE	410,00 €
Applicant C	day	17	82,00 €	GRE	1.394,00 €
Applicant E	day	3	124,00 €	DK	372,00 €
2. Accommodation Allowance (at Host University)					
Applicant A	day	30	166,00 €	FRA	4.980,00 €
Applicant B	day	30	166,00 €	FRA	4.980,00 €
Applicant C	day	60	166,00 €	FRA	9.960,00 €
Applicant D	day	14	166,00 €	FRA	2.324,00 €
Applicant E	day	23	166,00 €	FRA	3.818,00 €
2. Accommodation Allowance (at partner university, for access to Research Infrastructure)					
Applicant A	day	5	107,00 €	GRE	535,00 €
Applicant C	day	17	107,00 €	GRE	1.819,00 €
Applicant E	day	3	158,00 €	DK	474,00 €
3. Travel (to Host University, indicate city of origin)					
Applicant A	km	64	N/A	FRA	23,00 €
Applicant B	km	72	N/A	FRA	23,00 €
Applicant C	km	1490	N/A	FRA	275,00 €
Applicant D	km	467	N/A	FRA	180,00 €
Applicant E	km	780	N/A	FRA	275,00 €
4. Travel (to partner university, indicate city of origin)					
Applicant A	km	1490	N/A	GRE	275,00 €
Applicant C	km	1490	N/A	GRE	275,00 €
Applicant E	km	780	N/A	DK	275,00 €
4. Research Infrastructure (Host University)					
Technical Support at Engineering	hour	20	100,00 €	FRA	2.000,00 €
Filing fee		1	80,00 €	FRA	80,00 €
Lab+Workspace rental	day	30	2.000,00 €	FRA	60.000,00 €
Library access	day	30	720,00 €	FRA	21.600,00 €
Personal Protective Equipment	per person	5	48,00 €	FRA	240,00 €
5. Other fees					
Expert A	daily allowance	5	92,00 €	FRA	460,00 €
Expert A	accommodation	5	100,00 €	FRA	500,00 €
Expert A	travel allowance	780	N/A	FRA	275,00 €
5. Mentor Honorarium Fee					
Mentor A	Honorarium	1	2.000,00 €		2.000,00 €
Mentor B	Honorarium	1	2.000,00 €		2.000,00 €
6. Science with and for Society					
Flat fee		1	10.000,00 €		10.000,00 €
Total Cost					147.836,00 €

Annex C: Mentorship Handbook

Responsibilities and Expectations

Mentors and mentees must agree to abide by the EPICUR-Research Mentorship Program Code of Conduct.

The mentorship relationship starts from date of the orientation meeting. The mentors and mentees should meet at least once per month, or more frequently if necessary or desired. Suggested meeting length is 30-60 minutes. Meetings can be via virtual means or in person if constraints allow. The mentors and the mentee should agree when and how they will meet for the duration of the residency.

Mentors and mentees are required to attend an orientation and virtual discussion group to assess any goals that mentees wish to achieve. It is strongly recommended for program participants to create a list of goals that they wish to achieve through this program, which they will discuss in the first meeting with their mentors.

At the first meeting, mentors and mentees should review the Mentorship Action Plan, documenting any ground rules, meeting times, and the mentees goals and objectives. Both mentors and mentees should clearly communicate when information being shared is confidential and honour any requests for confidentiality.

Mentors are responsible for jointly designing a feasible work plan with EPICUR Fellows, including an assessment of the participants' goals, strengths, and weaknesses; monitoring participants' research progress and giving constructive feedback in regular meetings; and offering advice and support to the participants as needed.

At the end of the residency, mentors and mentees reflect on the end of the project and submit a short evaluation report to EPICUR-Research outlining the results achieved.

Mentors Expectations

Mentor incentives include:

- ongoing mentor research referenced in mentees' future works, providing an opportunity for mentors for their research to be cited in the future;
- lifelong co-publishing opportunities with mentees once young researchers establish more expertise in their fields;
- exposure of work to fresh markets, diverse audiences, new readers and diverse countries;
- benefit from mentees serving as resources for information on conferences and networking opportunities;
- enjoy entryways to new markets and opportunities for employment, full time as well as part time through summer courses or occasionally through visiting fellowships or teaching posts;
- expand into transdisciplinary pathways as mentees enter private or public markets, linking mentor research outside the sphere of academia

Mentorship Program Code of Conduct

EPICUR-Research is committed to diversity, equity, and providing a safe and productive meeting environment that fosters open dialogue and the free expression of ideas. EPICUR-Research recognizes a shared responsibility to create and maintain that environment for the benefit of all.

All participants are expected to observe values of integrity, objectivity, and confidentiality. Participants should respect each other and keep relationships free of discrimination or harassment, maintain professional and ethical conduct at all times during the mentorship relationship, and not allow bias, conflict of interest or undue influence of others to override their judgment.

Participants shall not disclose, share, and duplicate any information to third parties without consent unless there is a legal or professional right or duty to disclose. Confidential information acquired as a result of participating in the Mentorship Program in the EPICluster Residency Program should not be used for personal advantage or third parties.

Exploitation of the mentor/mentee relationship to seek an appropriate advantage, financial or non-financial, is strictly forbidden.

Mentorship Action Plan

The Mentorship Action Plan outlines the goals and practicalities of how the mentorship relationship will work. EPICUR Fellows should submit the completed form (Part 1 and 2) to parodi@unistra.fr at the conclusion of the residency.

Part 1 EXPECTATION AND GOALS

In order to ensure a thriving, rewarding, and satisfying experience, mentors and mentees agree to:

- Meet at least once a month (or more if desired). Meetings will take place either in-person, over the phone, by video-conference, or by other means as necessary;
- Honor specific ground rules. Rules should be listed during the first mentor-mentees meeting;
- Provide regular feedback to each other and evaluate progress;
- Work toward the goals and objectives of both the mentors and the mentees as the focus of this mentoring relationship.

Part 2 OUTCOMES

Based on the mutually-agreed upon goals, mentors and mentees may reflect on the success of their mentorship relationship. The following questions provide icebreaker examples to engage in a fruitful conversation during the last meeting:

- Did your mentorship experience result in achieving the desired outcomes as identified at your first meeting?
- What were the most beneficial aspects of the mentorship relationship?
- What unexpected benefits were realized?

Developing a Productive Mentor/Mentee Relationship

Mentor

To prepare for your first meeting, you might want to:

- Review the EPICcluster profile or mentees' résumé (if available) to determine how your area of expertise will be beneficial to the mentees;
- Summarize your goals and expectations for the mentoring partnership.

In preparation for that first meeting, review the list of questions listed below to select those that might be useful establishing the needs and expectations of your mentees and to get to know your mentees personally and professionally:

- What is your background and experience?
- Which area have you worked the most?
- What knowledge areas would you like to develop?
- What skills do you have with which you are confident?
- Which skills do you desire to develop?
- How can I help you develop these skills?
- What attracted you to the EPICcluster Residency Program?
- At the end of the Mentorship Program, how would you like to have grown as a result of this mentoring relationship?
- What one thing can I do to ensure a positive experience for you in this relationship?
- What should I expect from you in this mentoring partnership?

Mentees

To prepare for your first meeting, you might want to:

- Summarize your personal and professional goals;
- Identify your goals and expectations of the mentoring relationship.