

Executive Summary

Choose Europe for Science Initiative – Strategic Brief for Research Centers

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What It Is

The **Choose Europe for Science** initiative is a European Commission-led effort to make **Europe the world's leading destination for research talent**. It responds to global challenges like academic repression and declining research budgets abroad, notably in the U.S¹.

Why It Matters

This initiative enables European research centers to:

- Attract top global researchers
- Offer competitive, long-term research careers
- Leverage EU co-funding to expand capacity

Key Opportunities

1. ERC Super Grants (from 2026)²

- 7-year ERC funding for exceptional researchers
- **€2M top-up** for non-EU researchers relocating to Europe

2. MSCA “Choose Europe” Pilot (Launch: 1 Oct 2025)³

- Funds **minimum 3 postdocs** per project
- EU funds first 2–3 years; institution funds additional 2
- Max **€3.5M per project, €22.5M total budget**

3. EURAXESS Platform⁴

- Centralized job listings, mobility tools, and relocation support

¹ [European Commission, May 2025, EURAXESS, European Parliament April 2025 resolution](#)

² [European Commission press release, 5 May 2025](#)

³ [MSCA Work Programme 2025, Funding & Tenders Portal](#)

⁴ [EURAXESS Official Portal](#)

Strategic Benefits⁵

- Recruit talent from regions with declining support for science (e.g., U.S.)
- Boost institutional research profile via ERC and MSCA recognition
- Align with EU long-term goals ([ERA Policy Agenda 2025–2027](#))

Risks & Considerations

- Requires **internal commitment to long-term employment**
- **Highly competitive** selection process (especially ERC grants)
- Potential **funding policy shifts** under the upcoming EU Competitiveness Fund⁶

Recommendations

- **Prepare proposals** for MSCA pilot by **3 Dec 2025** and check whether **other funding sources can be used for the co-funding**.
- **Influence the national funding agency for science** to develop a co-funding program specifically for the Choose Europe pilot (it is very similar to the FCT Tenure Program);
- **Identify high-impact research leaders** for ERC Super Grant 2026
- **List vacancies** and recruitment campaigns on EURAXESS
- **Stay engaged** with ERA and MFF developments

⁵ [ERA Policy Agenda, May 2025](#)

⁶ [LERU Position Paper, May 2025; EU Budget Conference, 20 May 2025](#)

Co-Funding Opportunity: MSCA “Choose Europe for Science” Pilot - Proposal for FCT Co-Funding

Objective

To support national research centers in successfully applying for the **MSCA “Choose Europe” pilot**, a new EU programme designed to attract top postdoctoral researchers by incentivizing **longer-term employment** and **excellent working conditions**. National co-funding can **amplify participation**, increase institutional competitiveness, and strengthen national research ecosystems.

Pilot Overview – MSCA “Choose Europe”

- **Call opens:** 1 October 2025; **deadline:** 3 December 2025
 - **Target:** Recruitment of at least **3 postdoctoral researchers per project**
 - **Duration:** 4–5 years; **EU co-funds first 2–3 years**, institutions fund the remaining 2
 - **Budget:** €22.5M total; up to €3.5M per project
 - **Funding covers:** fixed allowances (~€6,700/month/researcher), long-term leave, special needs support
 - **Eligibility:** EU-based legal entities; emphasis on **long-term employment perspectives**
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Why National Co-Funding Matters

1. Maximize National Participation

- Without co-funding, many research centers may **struggle to commit** to the 2 additional years of salary and benefits.
- National support would **de-risk applications**, encouraging broader institutional engagement and more ambitious proposals.

2. Leverage EU Investment

- Every national euro potentially unlocks **1–2 years of EU funding per researcher**.
- Supports the national goal of attracting and retaining **top international research talent**.

3. Align with EU Strategic Priorities

- The pilot aligns with key ERA goals: reducing precarity, fostering excellence, and internationalizing careers.
 - Co-funding signals national alignment with the **European Research Area Policy Agenda 2025–2027**.
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Policy & Funding Model Options

- ◇ **Model A: Centralized Matching Grant Scheme**
 - Provide direct grants to research centers whose MSCA proposals are selected.
 - Covers salary/stipend for final 2 years (e.g., €160–180K per researcher total).
 - Flexible co-financing rate: 50–100%.

- ◇ **Model B: Conditional Guarantee Fund**
 - Guarantee national top-up only if EU funding is secured.
 - Reduces upfront risk for institutions and accelerates commitments during proposal stage.

- ◇ **Model C: Tiered Bonus System**
 - Offer bonus incentives for institutions hiring beyond minimum (e.g., >3 postdocs) or offering tenure-track positions.
 - Could be structured as outcome-based funding tied to retention or diversity benchmarks.

Operational Considerations

- Align funding calendar with **MSCA pilot deadlines** (October–December 2025).
- Use existing infrastructure (e.g., national MSCA contact points) for application support.
- Coordinate with ministries or labor authorities to streamline **employment regulations for non-EU researchers**.
- Integrate with **national talent attraction strategies**, research visa schemes, or innovation funding.

Strategic Outcomes

- More national institutions eligible and competitive for EU funds
- Higher retention of postdoctoral talent
- Strengthened international research ties
- Visible national alignment with European science policy goals
- Greater return on EU R&I investments domestically

If you want to know more contact us at pre-award@ist-id.pt