



UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI YA FREISTATA

Call for Proposals: NRF-European Research Council

The NRF/European Research Council (ERC) – (UFS internal closing date: 22 June 2026) *Note: Postdocs are eligible to apply for this call.

Background:

The NRF/ERC partnership was established to promote international research collaboration and develop researchers' global exposure. In 2012, the European Research Council (ERC) launched the 'Opening ERC Teams to the World' initiative, allowing non-European researchers to collaborate with ERC-funded teams. Aligning with South Africa's Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) and National Research Foundation (NRF) goals for human capacity development, South Africa joined the initiative in 2015, becoming one of 12 partner countries alongside nations such as Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, India, Japan, and the USA.

The partnership enables South African researchers to undertake research visits and collaborate with ERC-funded teams hosted at European institutions. These collaborations are expected to focus on shared scientific interests and mutually beneficial research areas. Through this call, the NRF invites South African researchers to apply for opportunities to work with ERC-funded researchers, with a list of participating European projects provided in the accompanying guidelines.

Aim:

- Support scientific advancement in South Africa and the EU by funding research visits in areas of mutual interest.
- Provide opportunities for early- to mid-career South African researchers to collaborate and engage with European researchers.
- Strengthen the research capacity, profile, and international competitiveness of South African researchers.
- Promote international exposure and networking opportunities for South African researchers.

Eligibility criteria:

- South African researchers interested in undertaking research visits to ERC-supported teams, as listed in **Annexure A**, are eligible to apply.
- Early- to mid-career researchers (i.e. researchers who are 40 years and younger and hold a doctoral degree) will be prioritised for this call. Early- to mid-career researchers who are currently undertaking their postdoctoral studies, supported through any of the NRF postdoctoral funding instruments, are also eligible to apply.
- Researchers interested in applying for this opportunity should be South African citizens and/or permanent residents working in/or affiliated with a recognised South African higher education or research institution such as a university, university of technology, science council, or any other research institution as declared by the DSI.
- Please note that researchers based at commercial institutions and private higher education institutions are not eligible to apply under this programme.

Financial support:

Researchers who are currently not funded by any of the NRF instruments may apply for a maximum amount of R150 000. Researchers are advised to look for other sources of funding in order to supplement this amount should the NRF grant be insufficient. Early- to mid-career

researchers already funded by the NRF will continue to receive their NRF project funds during the period of the visit. Through this collaboration, these researchers are allowed to use their postdoctoral fellowship's running and/or travel expenses to cover the travel costs (i.e. flights, accommodation, and subsistence costs) associated with their visits to the ERC supported teams.

Duration of the programme:

The programme supports South African researchers to collaborate with European researchers who already hold EU-funded ERC grants. It allows for either

one long-term research visit (6–12 months); or
several short-term visits ranging from 10 days to 6 months, such as for joint experiments.

All visits must start before the ERC grant ends.

Note: All applications should be submitted via NRF Connect: <https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za> .
Please find attached a guide to assist you in creating a profile.

For more information on the application procedures, kindly refer to the funding framework attached herein.

For more information and assistance with proposal writing, please contact:

- Thabi Mosoetsa (Mosoetsat@ufs.ac.za / +27 51 401 7708)

Access more information here:

- [NRF European Research Council: Call Guideline 2026](#)
- [Annexure A: European Research Council IA 2025](#)