

EMERGE WP6: Knowledge co-creation to address the challenges of our territories

T6.2.4 Joint Research Call 2026 (MS27)

Our Alliance

EMERGE brings together nine European universities committed to “Empowering the Margins of Europe through Regional and Global Engagement”. Together, we aim to better serve our marginalised territories and communities by building a network of equal partners, deeply embedded in our regions and capable of proposing alternative models to dominant top-down paradigms of development and representations of society.

Our Mission

The EMERGE Joint Research Call is designed to fulfil the Alliance’s mission:

***Societal engagement** is the First Mission of EMERGE. It is our societal and territorial mission that drives our approach to research and education and defines the way we operate as universities.*

Our Joint Research Call

EMERGE will coordinate an annual call for research proposals funded by all partners. Individual institutional funds will be pooled to launch a call for proposals in one of the pre-identified research clusters that meet the basic principles of the research Alliance and that promote knowledge co-creation in, about, for and with the margins.

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1. Goal

In accordance with the directives established in our EMERGE Alliance Grant Agreement, we are launching the first edition of the EMERGE Joint Research Call for 2026, with a particular emphasis on research activities linked to the four EMERGE Thematic Clusters, namely:

1. **Inclusion and solidarity:** Social inclusion and cohesion, Decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), Access to quality education (SDG 4) and training, Gender equality (SDG 5) and Reducing inequalities (SDG 10).
2. **Sustainability and digital transition:** Circular economy, Industry, innovation and infrastructure (SDG 9), Sustainable cities and communities, Responsible production and consumption (SDG 12).
3. **Resilience and wellbeing:** Active European citizenship, good health and wellbeing (SDG 3), Peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16).
4. **Plurilingualism and multiculturalism:** Language and culturally sensitive education, educating for intercultural competence, Preserving minority and heritage languages, heritage and capital.

Proposals submitted under this call may be framed around any of the four EMERGE research clusters, which should provide the basis for their principal research objectives

Taking into account the general EMERGE directives, special attention will be given to enhancing interdisciplinary community-based research that involves our senior researchers, post-docs, and PhDs students in the overall EMERGE Research Strategy, in order to share participatory research tools and methods, and to advance the objectives of our thematic clusters.

We will also promote any synergies that may arise between the research topics funded by this Joint Research call and the knowledge fields identified as core components of the degree programmes that will be offered jointly by the EMERGE Alliance.

Funding for this call will not be drawn from the EMERGE project budget. Instead, it will be provided by the home institution of the successful Main Researcher (MR), subject to their institution's internal regulations and budget availability.

2. Scope

The call is open to all academic disciplines. The proposed projects should fit thematically into at least one of the four EMERGE Thematic Research Cluster listed above.

Proposals should be aligned with the overall EMERGE Research Strategy. We invite applications for funding innovative inter-university collaborations with a particular focus on interdisciplinary projects that address contemporary societal, industrial, and scientific challenges through collaboration and knowledge exchange within the EMERGE network of Third Places.

The aim is to enhance international cooperation between EMERGE universities through projects developed jointly. Funding is intended as a starting point: successful projects should

serve as a foundation for long-term collaboration, with the goal of securing continued support from external, national or European, public and private funding schemes.

3. Eligibility

The call is open to researchers and academics who already hold a PhD, as well as early-stage researchers and PhD students affiliated to any of the nine EMERGE member universities. While proposals should be submitted by **teams comprising participants from at least two EMERGE universities, those involving three or more institutions will be viewed particularly favourably.**

Main Researchers and Local Research Coordinators

Each proposal must have:

- one designated **Main Researcher (MR)** affiliated to one of the EMERGE member institutions.
- one **Local Research Coordinator (LRC)** in charge at each of the participating member institutions.

The MRs and the Local Research Coordinators must hold a PhD degree and have an employment contract at the respective EMERGE member universities. The Main Researchers' contracts should cover the entire duration of the envisioned project and reporting period. Any changes in the leadership of the project during the project period must be approved by the lead institution and communicated to the rest of the participating institutions and EMERGE Local Coordinators.

Role of the Main Researcher

As the main applicant, the MR will be responsible for submitting the proposal and for reporting after the project is finalised. Furthermore, the MR is responsible for the project coordination and for monitoring the overall implementation of the project, with the support of the LRC. Should a MR leave their institution during the funded project period, a suitable replacement must be appointed at their institution in a timely manner.

Role of the Local Research Coordinator

Local Research Coordinators will develop the planned activities at their institution, in line with the application submitted and under the supervision of the MR. Local Research Coordinators are the main point of contact for the EMERGE Local Office at their institution. They will receive internal information regarding funding and will be responsible for internal reporting. Their contact details should be included in the application form. Should an LRC leave their institution during the funded project period, a suitable replacement must be appointed at their institution in a timely manner.

Project teams

The participation of early-stage researchers, PhD candidates, and students as project team members is strongly encouraged. Please note that if a student is included in the project team, the project must also involve at least one academic staff member from the same university serving as Local Research Coordinator.

The participation of external partners is also strongly encouraged. However, they are not eligible to act as MRs or to receive direct funding under this call. Nevertheless, they may participate in the project at their own expense.

Further requirements

A final report detailing the project's outcomes and the extent to which its objectives have been achieved must be submitted by the end of the project and no later than 31st December 2027. All research publications resulting from this funding call should include the EMERGE Alliance in its acknowledgements. Failure to comply with any of these requirements may result in the withdrawal of funding

Language

All proposals must be submitted entirely in English. The use of the local university language for a bilingual version is also encouraged.

4. Duration

Projects can run for a period of up to 11 months. The expected earliest starting date for projects is 1st January 2027.

5. Available funding

The maximum funding available per project is €10,000. The total amount of funding requested by each project must be justified and calculated based on the actual resources required for all partners to complete the project.

A maximum of six (6) projects will be funded under the 2026 call. Similar calls will be launched in 2027 and 2028, resulting in a maximum of eighteen (18) funded projects over this 4-year project. **Funding for successful projects will be provided by the MR’s home institution. Across the three annual calls, each university may fund a maximum of two (2) successful projects.** Therefore, **the maximum amount provided by each university for the EMERGE Joint Research Calls during the four-year period, will be € 20,000.** Requests for funding above €10,000 per proposal will not be considered.

The main features of this call can be summarized as follows:

Joint Call Summary	
Call frequency	1 per year
Total number of calls	3 (2026, 2027, 2028)

Number of projects funded at each annual call	6
Budget allocated per project	Up to €10,000
Total budget per partner	Up to €20,000 for the three-year period
Number of projects led by a MR at each university	Up to two
Minimum number of research groups necessary for each application	2

At least one project led by an MR from each member university will be selected over the four-year duration of the EMERGE project, provided that the proposal meets the minimum eligibility requirements.

6. Activities

The call is open to all academic disciplines with a particular focus on research activities linked to the four EMERGE Thematic Research Clusters. Planned activities should result in the establishment of research cooperation, and all proposals must include a precise and realistic sustainability plan addressing the perspectives for the continued collaboration of the project members beyond the project duration. Projects that envisage the preparation of joint proposals for external funding are strongly encouraged.

This call is addressed to both seed and plain research proposals.

Seed-funding can be provided for projects fostering newly founded or established research collaborations between EMERGE partners aimed at long-term cooperation, also including the preparation of applications for further funding with special regard to European Commission Research and Innovation Calls.

The following are examples of research and innovation activities eligible for funding:

- Exploratory workshops to prepare joint externally funded proposals.
- Innovation projects aimed at developing partnerships with external partners in line with EMERGE outreach goals.
- Networking activities such as conferences, workshop series or symposia with the objective of fostering EMERGE Research Groups (D6.1 EMERGE Research Strategy), particularly for early-stage researchers.
- Collaborative research stays for researchers and doctoral students.

7. How to apply

All proposals must be submitted electronically via the **online application form** [\(link\)](#) no later than 15th November 2026, 23.59 CET. In addition to the online application form, applicants are requested to submit the following annexes:

- **Letters of intent** from the universities, third-places, companies and institutions (e-mail version accepted), signed by the head of the faculty/department/company/institution
- **An abbreviated CV** (max. two pages) for each applicant
- **A budget form**

8. Eligible expenses

Each university will cover the costs of those successful projects led by its own staff. Applicants should take into account the budget constraints of their home institution.

The table below sets out examples of activities that may be eligible for funding, subject in all cases to the regulations and funding rules of the MR's home institution.

The eligible costs of a project can vary significantly between Alliance partners. We highly recommend contacting your EMERGE Local Office. Tentative eligible and non-eligible expenses are listed below.

Activity/Cost	
Travel and subsistence expenses: airfare (economy class), train, car rental, accommodation, meals, visas, or similar	eligible
Costs of hosting seminars/conferences or workshops (e.g., venue rental, catering, accommodation)	eligible
Publications (related to collaborative research) costs, including Open Access fees	eligible
Hiring local student assistants	eligible
Internship stipends	eligible
Salaries for local MRs’ support teams (scientific, administrative)	eligible
Internal invoicing for access to research infrastructures	eligible
Subcontracting	eligible
Scientific equipment	eligible
Stipend payments to non-EMERGE member institutions individuals	not eligible
Fellowships, scholarships for theses	not eligible
Website development	not eligible
Entertainment costs	not eligible
Office supplies and furniture	not eligible
Indirect costs	not eligible

The definition of cost categories and accounting regulations may vary from one Member University to another. Applicants are requested to contact the EMERGE Local Offices at their

respective home universities before submitting their proposal to ensure their budget calculations and selected types of expenses comply with their home university cost eligibility rules. All travel activities must comply with internal rules of the respective universities. EMERGE strongly encourages climate-friendly travel arrangements. Budget consultations with the EMERGE Local Office at your university are highly recommended.

9. Selection procedure

An eligibility screening procedure will be performed by the 9 EMERGE WP6 representatives at each of the universities. Only eligible proposals will be submitted to the **Evaluation Committee** (ten members), composed of the nine WP6 EMERGE representatives and chaired by the Secretary General (SG) or to whom she delegates. The WP6 leader will act as Secretary of this evaluation committee, which will produce a list of ranked proposals. After receiving the list of ranked proposals, the EMERGE **Steering Committee (SC)** will make the final decision regarding which projects will receive funding.

10. Evaluation

Submitted project proposals will be evaluated in accordance with the following criteria:

Objectives and Methodology (30/100)

- **Clarity and pertinence of the project's objectives**, soundness of the proposed methodological approach.
- **Alignment with the values and principles of the EMERGE Alliance** and the aims of its thematic clusters.
- **Alignment with the community engagement participatory research tools and methods** promoted by the EMERGE Alliance.
- **Involvement of several research TEAMS from different universities of the alliance** (minimum of two).

Novelty (20/100)

- To what extent is the proposed work **ambitious and innovative**?
- If previous work in EMERGE is mentioned in the application, how does the project build on its results and add innovative components to the previous work?

Implementation (30/100)

- **Quality and effectiveness of the work plan**, and appropriateness of the effort as well as allocated resources.
- **Capacity and role of each participant**, and extent to which the consortium brings together the necessary expertise.

Expected results / Sustainability (20/100)

- **Suitability of the pathways to achieve the expected results** and quality of the measures to maximize expected outcomes.

- **Credibility and feasibility of the pathways and tools for granting the sustainability of the project.**
- **Prospect of seeding in the future a larger research collaboration within the EMERGE framework.**

Projects will be selected by score, but subject to the institutional cap of two projects per institution.

11. Timeline

Application opens	15 th September 2026
Application deadline	15 th November 2026, 23.59 (CET)
Notification to applicants	15 th December 2026
Earliest date for projects to start	1 st January 2027
Latest date for projects to end	30 th November 2027
Final report due	31 st December 2027

12. Information sessions

Two TEAMS online information sessions will be organised to introduce the 2026 EMERGE Joint Research Call:

- **Tuesday, 8th September 2026 10.00-11.00h (CET):** International introductory session for all interested applicants in English chaired by WP6 lead.
- **Tuesday, 8th September 2026 11.00-12.00h (CET):** Local introductory session for all interested applicants in local language chaired by local coordinators.

You can also view the recordings at [\(link\)](#)

13. Contacts

For further information, please contact:

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