

Grant program to support the participation of researchers from the Politehnica University of Bucharest (UPB) in international research teams carrying out ERC grants

Guide for Applicants

Call name: Visit Start Research (**VizStar Grants**)

Call for Proposals **VizStar Grants**
to Support the Participation in International Research Teams Working on ERC Grants

This program is addressed to researchers intending to apply for a research grant to the calls launched by the European Research Council (ERC).

The objective of the program is to provide support to UPB researchers for preparing their proposals in view of applying to ERC calls and so to increase the number of UPB applicants who win ERC Grants.

VizStar Grants are provided to support the participation of UPB researchers in research teams of ERC-funded Principal Investigators. The UPB grant aims to increase the academic profile of the candidates who intend to participate in competitions for ERC funds, giving them the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and experience required for applying to ERC calls for proposals.

This UPB program and its calls are in line with the ERC Guidelines for "Fellowship to Visit ERC Grantee" whereby the ERC creates the opportunity for potential ERC candidates to visit through a nationally or through an organizationally funded program the teams of the ERC Principal Investigators for acquiring knowledge and strengthening their research profile and vision in internationally competitive research environments.

Conditions for submitting a proposal for VizStar Grants

Proposals are submitted by researchers working at UPB. The proposals must involve frontier research in any field of science.

In order to be eligible for the grant, *the candidate* must:

- have a PhD degree;
- be employed on the basis of an employment contract at UPB;
- have carried out a research project funded by the National RDI Plan II, the National RDI Plan III or by international programs;
- not be or not have been and ERC Principal Investigator;
- undertakes to submit a project proposal having UPB as Host Institution to an ERC call within 18 months of the end of the UPB project.

Proposals are eligible if they:

- contain a draft project proposal intended for an ERC call, in which the candidate is Principal Investigator and which will be improved during the visit;

- present the plan for a 3 to 5 month visit to an international research team conducting research funded by an ERC grant;
- demonstrate that an ERC Principal Investigator will act as a host by presenting a letter of support from the proposed ERC Principal Investigator and their Host Institution.

The UPB grant

UPB will award to the selected applicant a grant of max. € 10,000 for the duration of the visit to cover the subsistence costs (up to € 2,000 / month) and the travel costs.

Failure to comply with the applicant's obligation to submit a proposal to the ERC within 18 months after the end of the visit will constrain the applicant to return to the UPB all funds received through this grant.

Procedure and deadline for submitting the proposal

The proposal with all the necessary annexes must be submitted in electronic format between June – October via Easy Chair.

The evaluation procedure

First the eligibility is checked and then each eligible proposal is evaluated by peer review.

The evaluation of proposals takes into account the following criteria:

- the candidate's results in the research activity;
- the potential of the research activities within the project to eventually lead into a competitive proposal in one of the future ERC calls, including the ground-breaking nature of the research, its scientific impact on the advancement of knowledge and the feasibility assessment of the proposed research with due regard for high-risk/high-gain research.

The formal and the eligibility assessment are carried out by the UPB VizStar Grants management team, while the peer-review evaluation is carried out by a team of national external experts (designated by UPB) with support from internal or external researchers who had / have ongoing ERC or Horizon 2020 projects.

Proposals are subject to a two-stage peer review:

Stage I - The preliminary evaluation takes place on the basis of the information provided in the proposal together with the annexes. Each proposal is evaluated by two experts from the team of experts proposed by the VizStar Grants management team and accepted by the entire team of experts. This implies two independent evaluations by two members of the expert team. Proposals qualify for the second stage of evaluation based on their position on the ranking list. The total budget requested by the proposals going to stage II cannot exceed twice the budget allocated by UPB for the call.

Stage II - The evaluation is based on the information provided in the proposal together with the annexes. It involves evaluations performed by evaluators, who are not members of the expert team, who had / have ongoing ERC or Horizon 2020 projects, who take into consideration the Stage I

evaluation reports, conduct an interview with the candidate in English and write a final evaluation report. The stage-II evaluators are proposed by the VizStar Grants management team and agreed by the expert team.

Subsequently, the expert team shall establish the final ranking list of project proposals.