

CIRCLE U. SEED FUNDING

2024 CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

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1 ABOUT THE CALL

The objective of the Circle U. seed funding scheme is **to foster new collaborations across institutions in the Circle U. alliance**. It is a mechanism that provides academic and research staff, administrative/professional staff and students with opportunities to develop projects across the alliance, to strengthen the alliance and to drive bottom-up initiatives. By funding **smaller scale, limited in time, bottom-up projects**, the ultimate goal is to facilitate the initiation of potential long-term collaborative activities within the alliance which are contributing to the fulfilment of [Circle U.'s vision and mission](#). These projects go thus beyond the deliverables defined in the current EU-funded projects and will anchor Circle U. sustainably in all institutions.

For the **2024 call for applications**, both educational and research projects, as well as student-led projects, will be supported as explained below.

2 SCOPE

The seed funding scheme **seeks to achieve the following goals**:

- 1 Drive **bottom-up initiatives to embed the alliance** within our universities' communities
- 2 Advance Circle U.'s strategic research and teaching themes – so not exclusively those addressed by Circle U.'s three current Knowledge Hubs on Climate, Democracy and Global Health, the new Knowledge Hub on Artificial Intelligence and the joint platforms (CU.mil, CU.til, InCU.bator and CU.ecr)
- 3 Develop high quality and impactful educational and research activities, with a particular focus on **interdisciplinarity, multilingualism, interculturality and student-led innovation**
- 4 Consolidate **our joint ecosystem and its various platforms** – the Open Campus, the Knowledge Hubs, the Teaching Innovation Lab (CU.til), the Multilingualism, Interculturality and Language Lab (CU.mil), the InCU.bator and the Community of practice for early-career researchers (CU.ecr)
- 5 Engage with our [associated partners](#) and other stakeholders in the innovation, cultural, health, governmental and NGO sectors to ensure that Circle U. activities have concrete societal impact
- 6 Contribute to **increased mobility and international exposure** of students, academics, researchers and staff among our universities
- 7 Foster sustainability, talent-development, entrepreneurship, societal engagement, equity, diversity and inclusion

3 EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES THAT CAN BE FUNDED

The Circle U. seed funding scheme aims to support the **developmental stages of a project at an early stage**. Therefore, seed-funded projects fit under a **wide variety of definitions**. Examples of what could constitute a seed funding project within the context of the alliance include, but are not limited to:

For **educational and research projects**:

- developing joint courses or programmes
- organizing challenge-based learning activities
- organizing winter or summer schools
- organizing short-term physical or blended mobility opportunities
- organizing workshops or seminars or any other teaching/learning activity
- developing innovative teaching models

- organizing public lectures
- organizing language workshops or seminars
- organizing seminars, workshops and conferences targeting early-career researchers
- conducting (preliminary) research activities
- conducting surveys, creating a database, developing research materials
- producing awareness-raising material for the alliance (e.g. digital brochures or videos, etc.)
- preparing joint large-scale project proposals to be submitted at European (or other) calls

For **student-led projects**:

- supporting student-driven learning activities
- supporting student democracy and student engagement in partner universities
- facilitating the dissemination of Circle U. towards students
- supporting learning and training activities
- organizing cultural activities across Circle U.
- further developing and implementing projects linked to other Circle U. opportunities (for example, the change maker's programme)

The list above is **non-exhaustive**, the selection committee will consider applications suggesting other activities too, provided they clearly state how they match the scope of the seed funding scheme.

4 ELIGIBILITY

The 2024 call for applications is **open to academic and research staff from all disciplines and levels** working at any Circle U. member universities¹, to administrative/professional staff as well as to **students working or being enrolled** at any Circle U. member universities.

Each application shall be submitted by a **Project Lead**, appointed by the project members and acting as the point of contact with Circle U. for any questions relating to the project. Project Leads shall be employed as full-time or part-time academic and research staff at any of the Circle U. member universities, with the employment contract lasting for the full length of the proposed project. Within her/his home university, the Project Lead should hold a position that enables her/him to manage the grant independently and supervise funding and expenditures.

Students acting as Project Lead shall be enrolled at any Circle U. member universities for the full duration of the proposed project.

Please note that external stakeholders may not act as the Project Lead.

Projects should involve staff or students **from at least 3 Circle U. member universities**.

5 SELECTION PROCESS AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

A **selection committee** consisting of 10 to 15 academics from the Circle U. member universities will be in charge of:

- Evaluating proposals

¹ Aarhus Universitet (Denmark), Univerzitet u Beogradu (Serbia), Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (Germany), King's College London (United Kingdom), UCLouvain (Belgium), Universitetet i Oslo (Norway), Université Paris Cité (France), Università di Pisa (Italy), and Universität Wien (Austria).

- Informing the Circle U. Management Board of the selection of proposals to be funded. The Management Board is the ultimate decision-making body for alliance operations
- Assessing post-implementation reports from projects which have been funded

Applications need to clearly outline how they fit into the scope of the Circle U. seed funding scheme and how they match the objectives, vision and mission of Circle U. Additionally, the selection panel will give particular attention to the **following criteria**:

- Academic quality
- Stating a clear pathway for educational and/or societal impact and for further supporting long-term collaborations within the alliance
- Trans- and interdisciplinary collaborations
- Proposals focusing on diversity and inclusion as a whole
- Involvement and benefits for students
- Engagement with multiple Circle U. member universities and associated partners or other stakeholders

The selection committee reserves the right to add selection criteria according to the quality of the applications received. In addition to the members of the committee, student-led projects will also be assessed by a student committee consisting of student representatives as proposed by Circle U. Student Union (CUSU).

Along with the communication of the results, all applications will receive a score and succinct comments that will be communicated to the project lead.

6 BUDGET

The **total budget** available for the 2024 call for applications is **EUR 100.000**. The budget is assigned in the following way:

Budget allocated to academic and research projects	EUR 90.000	Up to EUR 10.000 can be awarded per project
Budget allocated to student-led projects	EUR 10.000	Up to EUR 5.000 can be awarded per project

Funding will be transferred **as a lump sum by the Circle U. Office to the Project Lead's designated entity** (university, faculty, department, etc.). The Project Lead has the responsibility to manage the grant independently and supervise funding and expenditures and take care of the reporting.

The Project Lead should ensure that all activities foreseen in the project are primarily funded by the grant. If there is any complementary funding needed (for example, to support additional mobilities), the Project Lead should ensure that the complementary funding is actually available at his or her home university and partner universities, when elaborating the project budget. In this perspective, we strongly recommend to the Project Lead to consult her or his financial department as well as the Circle U. coordinator of her or his university.

Double funding is not allowed.

Eligible costs:

- temporary staff or consultant recruitment to support the project's activities (creation of a database, benchmarking specific to the entity, conducting surveys, etc.)
- preliminary research activities
- awareness-raising material for the alliance
- travel expenses and/or costs of living for teaching or research activities related to the project, if they cannot be covered from Erasmus+ staff mobility

Non-eligible costs:

- overhead costs
- hiring of contractual administrative, research or academic staff
- equipment costs
- conference fees

7 TIMELINE

CALL OPENS	CALL CLOSES	RESULTS ANNOUNCED	PROJECT PERIOD	IMPACT REPORT SUBMITTED
27 May 2024	15 October 2024	15 November 2024	1 January 2025 – 31 October 2025	31 December 2025

The timeline might be subject to changes, considering the administrative and financial processes. Two information sessions will be organised on 13 June 2024 and on 19 September 2024.

8 APPLICATION

Please submit the online application form via the following link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/seed-funding-call-2024>. The call will **close on 15 October 2024**, 20:00 CET. You may still edit your application until this deadline. To do so, just return to the survey link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/seed-funding-call-2024>. However, you must then use the same device and web browser you used to start the application on because a cookie saving your responses is stored in your browser.

For additional questions, please contact our team coordinating the seed funding call at: seedfunding@circle-u.eu.

9 COMMUNICATION, DISSEMINATION AND REPORTING

Project Leads are expected to communicate and disseminate the project's results, outputs and outcomes by providing targeted information to multiple audiences in a strategic and effective manner. This might include a final dissemination event.

Project Leads are requested to submit a report on implemented activities and a financial report after the end of the funding period. Reports will be submitted via email to seedfunding@circle-u.eu by 31 December 2025. A template will be sent in advance to the Project Lead by the Circle U. team coordinating the seed funding call.

10 ANNEXES

10.1 ABOUT CIRCLE U.

Aarhus Universitet (Denmark), Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (Germany), King's College London (United Kingdom), Università di Pisa (Italy), Universität Wien (Austria), Université catholique de Louvain (Belgium), Université Paris Cité (France), Universitetet i Oslo (Norway) and Univerzitet u Beogradu (Serbia) are Circle U.: an inclusive, research-intensive, and interdisciplinary European University alliance working to provide outstanding education, research, and innovation to contribute to more sustainable, democratic, and healthier societies. In 2020, we have joined forces to develop a new model of cooperation where education, research, innovation and service to society are better connected. During the pilot project (from November 2020 to October 2023) funded through Erasmus+ programme, we have worked closely with students, academics, researchers, staff and external stakeholders to test and identify new challenge-based educational formats and ways of working together to make Circle U. an international, inclusive, innovative and agile joint ecosystem.

In the next phase and through a new EU funded project in the coming four years, whilst continuously testing out new concepts in higher education and research cooperation, we will also scale up and offer a range of flexible learning opportunities, intensify our collaborations in all three missions and maximize our impacts through our joint ecosystem.

To fulfil our vision and mission, we have been developing a joint ecosystem offering a shared infrastructure as foundation for sustainable, impactful and ambitious collaborations across our universities. In the next phase, with the support of the academic chairs, we will consolidate and further develop this joint ecosystem and its core platforms to drive our vision towards a truly European University:

- The **Open Campus** will serve as the entry point for all educational opportunities in Circle U. This integrated digital learning platform will be at the heart of Circle U., linking together the various other platforms, including services to support mobility and facilitate the administrative and technical implementation.
- Launched in the pilot phase, the **Knowledge Hubs** are shared physical and virtual spaces where academics, researchers, students, staff and partners are developing research-based, trans- and interdisciplinary educational and research activities to tackle big societal challenges linked to our three priority themes: climate, democracy and global health. Following the decision made by the General Assembly, a new Knowledge Hub focusing on Artificial Intelligence will be established in the autumn 2024.
- Building on the results of the Think and Do Tank, the **Circle U. Teaching Innovation Lab (CU.til)** will support the development of innovative and creative teaching and learning formats that focus on research-based, trans- and interdisciplinary knowledge and societal engagement. The CU.til will connect teaching and learning support units across our universities and encourages research in education.
- The **Circle U. Multilingualism, Interculturality and Language Lab (CU.mil)** will support the development of a multilingual, plurilingual and intercultural environment within the alliance and beyond, by sharing experiences and existing offers, developing joint courses and other language and intercultural learning experiences (including for less frequently used languages) and developing a language policy for the alliance.
- Building on the results of the Student-led sustainable innovation initiatives, the **InCU.bator** will offer a structured space and concrete support opportunities for students in developing innovative projects with a societal impact. It will thus put students at the centre of societal innovation and, with the support of external partners, foster an entrepreneurial mindset in the broad sense.
- Built on the results of the early-career researchers' forum, the **Community of Practice for Early-Career Researchers (CU.ecr)** will provide early-career researchers with opportunities for networking, exchanges, competence building, mobility as well as developing and maturing their research interests

in close collaboration with colleagues from Circle U. The activities will be characterised by co-creative modes of cooperation.

10.2 APPLICATION FORM

PRELIMINARY INFORMATION

Please read this information carefully before completing up the application form.

The application form should be completed by the lead applicant in English and should be agreed by all project partners. The **application can only be submitted online**.

The 2024 call for applications, including the application link and form, can be found on the Circle U. website: <https://www.circle-u.eu/open-campus/calls/seed-funding-scheme-2024.html>. In the call, you will find a paper version of this form to help you prepare the application with your partners.

The call will close on **15 October 2024, 20:00 CET**. You may still edit your submission until this deadline. To do so, just return to the survey link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/seed-funding-call-2024>. However, you must then use the same device and web browser you used to start the application on because a cookie is stored in your browser that remembers your responses.

Once you have submitted your application, you will receive a confirmation. If you want a copy of your application, if you experience any problem with this form or have any additional questions please contact the Circle U. coordinating team at seedfunding@circle-u.eu.

* PRIVACY TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Circle U. AISBL is committed to protecting and respecting your privacy by maintaining the integrity and confidentiality of your personal data, in accordance with the GDPR and other applicable legislation. We collect, process and store your data for the sole purpose of evaluating your application. If your project is selected, we will use the identification data of your project for communication and dissemination purposes. For any question or request, please contact office@circle-u.eu.

I agree with those terms and conditions

*** If your project is not selected, do you consent to sharing your application with the Circle U. coordination team of your university? The purpose of sharing is to ensure support for re-submission or to explore other opportunities for support.**

Yes

No

LEAD APPLICANT DETAILS

*** Project lead**

First name	
Last name	
Home university	

Faculty/department/institute	
Position	
E-mail	

Are you currently (or have you been) a Circle U. Academic Chair?

- Yes
 No

Enter details of all other project participants from this university (first name, last name, position)

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*** Number of Circle U. member universities that will participate in the project apart from your university**

- 2
 3
 4
 5
 6
 7
 8

CIRCLE U. PROJECT PARTNERS DETAILS

*** Project partner 1**

First name	
Last name	
Home university	
Faculty/department/institute	
Position	
E-mail	

Are you currently (or have you been) a Circle U. Academic Chair?

- Yes
 No

Enter details of all other project participants from this university (first name, last name, position)

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*** Project partner 2**

First name	
Last name	
Home university	

Faculty/department/institute	
Position	
E-mail	

Are you currently (or have you been) a Circle U. Academic Chair?

- Yes
 No

Enter details of all other project participants from this university (first name, last name, position)

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Project partner 3 (if any)

First name	
Last name	
Home university	
Faculty/department/institute	
Position	
E-mail	

Are you currently (or have you been) a Circle U. Academic Chair?

- Yes
 No

Enter details of all other project participants from this university (first name, last name, position)

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Project partner 4 (if any)

First name	
Last name	
Home university	
Faculty/department/institute	
Position	
E-mail	

Are you currently (or have you been) a Circle U. Academic Chair?

- Yes
 No

Enter details of all other project participants from this university (first name, last name, position)

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Project partner 5 (if any)

First name	
Last name	
Home university	
Faculty/department/institute	
Position	
E-mail	

Are you currently (or have you been) a Circle U. Academic Chair?

- Yes
 No

Enter details of all other project participants from this university (first name, last name, position)

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Project partner 6 (if any)

First name	
Last name	
Home university	
Faculty/department/institute	
Position	
E-mail	

Are you currently (or have you been) a Circle U. Academic Chair?

- Yes
 No

Enter details of all other project participants from this university (first name, last name, position)

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Project partner 7 (if any)

First name	
Last name	
Home university	
Faculty/department/institute	
Position	
E-mail	

Are you currently (or have you been) a Circle U. Academic Chair?

- Yes
 No

Enter details of all other project participants from this university (first name, last name, position)

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Project partner 8 (if any)

First name	
Last name	
Home university	
Faculty/department/institute	
Position	
E-mail	

Are you currently (or have you been) a Circle U. Academic Chair?

- Yes
- No

Enter details of all other project participants from this university (first name, last name, position)

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INVOLVEMENT OF EXTERNAL PARTNERS IN YOUR PROJECT

* **Are there any external partners involved in the project** (by “external partners”, we mean [associated partners](#) that have been formally identified by the member universities, and other stakeholders that are committed to playing an active role in various Circle U. activities, thus contributing to the vision and mission of the alliance)?

- Yes
- No

Please indicate the details of the external partners involved:

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

* **01. Title of your project:**

02. Acronym of your project (this is meant to facilitate the communication of your project if it was selected):

* **03. What type of project are you proposing?**

- Academic and/or research project

Student-led project

*** 04. What are the main goals of your project? (select all that apply)**

- Drive bottom-up initiatives to anchor the alliance in its partner universities
- Advance Circle U.'s strategic research and teaching themes
- Develop high-quality research and teaching activities, with a particular focus on interdisciplinarity, multilingualism, interculturality and student-led innovation
- Consolidate our joint ecosystem and its various platforms (Open Campus, Knowledge Hubs, Teaching Innovation Lab, Multilingualism, Interculturality and Language Lab, InCU.bator and Community of practice for early-career researchers)
- Engage with other associate partners and stakeholders to ensure that Circle U. activities have societal impact
- Contribute to increased mobility and international exposure of students, academics, researchers and staff among our universities
- Foster sustainability, talent-development, entrepreneurship, societal engagement, equity, diversity and inclusion
- Other (please specify):

*** 05. If your project addresses one of the strategic themes of Circle U., indicate which theme:**

- Climate
- Democracy
- Global Health
- Artificial Intelligence
- The project addresses a different theme (please specify):

*** 06. Describe your project and elaborate more specifically on the objectives, the planned activities, the timeline, the contribution and share of responsibilities between project partners, the expected outputs and outcomes (max. 500 words):**

*** 07. Building on the objectives selected above, explain the expected impacts of your project on Circle U. development (max. 250 words):**

*** 08. Explain in which way your project has an interdisciplinary approach (max. 250 words):**

*** 09. Explain how inclusion and diversity are taken into account in your project (max. 250 words):**

10. If students are involved in the project, what are their expected contributions (max. 250 words)?

11. If external partners are involved in the project, what are their expected contributions (max. 250 words)?

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PROJECT BUDGET

* Please provide a provisional budget of your project (PFD or DOC), based on the template that you will find below. The budget should clearly indicate the type of costs, the corresponding amounts, the source of funding, the distribution among project partners.

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* Please indicate the total seed funding budget you are applying for. As indicated in the call for applications the budget allocated to academic and research projects is up to EUR 10 000 per project, and the budget allocated to student-led project is up to 5 000 EUR per project.

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* CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the information provided in this application is correct and complete. I confirm that I, as lead applicant, and my project partners have read the call for applications and will abide by the terms and conditions specified in the call if they are selected. Any provision of inaccurate or false information or omission of information will render this application invalid and, if an application is selected on the basis of such information, the applicants can be required to withdraw from the award. I confirm that I am in capacity to manage the grant independently and supervise funding and expenditures.

I hereby confirm that the authorities of my department/faculty/institute are informed about this application and in capacity to provide additional funds if planned in the project's budget.

* Identification of my department/faculty/institute authorities:

First name	
Last name	
Position	

10.3 PROJECT BUDGET TEMPLATE

Title of your project:

Project lead info:

First name	
Last name	
Home university	

Provisional project budget:

Cost description	Amount (in EUR)	Source of funding	Comment
See eligible costs in the application form	If cost is not in EUR, please use the reference rate published by the European Central Bank website: https://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/policy_and_exchange_rates/euro_reference_exchange_rates/html/index.en.html	Please indicate the actual or expected source of funding (the "home" university of the project lead or partners, external funders, associate partners, Circle U. seed funding scheme, etc.	
Total costs of your project	€ -		
Total amount you are requesting through Circle U. seed funding scheme			