

Seed Funding

2026 Call for Proposals

Updated: 9 October 2026

Objectives

The overall aim of the Una Europa Seed Funding Initiative is to **support long-term collaborative activities within the academic community of the [Una Europa universities](#)**. The 2026 call for proposals aims to support project proposals **contributing to the development of Interdisciplinary Hubs for education, research and innovation, and/or societal outreach in the six Una Europa Focus Areas:**

- [Cultural Heritage](#)
- [Data Science and Artificial Intelligence](#)
- [Europe and the World](#)
- [Future Materials and Technologies](#)
- [One Health](#)
- [Sustainability](#)

Project proposals that design sustainable cooperation formats with clear potential to **attract third-party funding** are strongly encouraged.

The call is open to **all academic disciplines**.

Connect with fellow researchers from other Una Europa universities interested in this call through [joining the dedicated LinkedIn group](#).

Eligibility and concept of the 2026 call

Eight projects will be funded, with a **maximum budget of € 30.000 per project**.

Proposals must include **at least three different Una Europa universities** with:

- **One Principal Investigator (PI)**, an established researcher affiliated to one of the Una Europa universities, who coordinates the project;
- **At least two Academic Leads**, established researchers who are each affiliated to an additional Una Europa university;

In addition, the formation of **interdisciplinary and diverse project teams** is encouraged, bringing together academics at different career stages, professional staff and students from Una Europa universities.

Involving **more than three Una Europa universities** is encouraged. Each additional university included must have one Academic Lead who is an established researcher.

Third-party organisations may participate. All costs related to third-party participation must be covered from sources other than the Seed Funding Initiative with the exception of costs that are considered subcontracting (see Annex 1).

Project proposals that bring **co-financing** from other sources will be evaluated favourably under the Impact criterion.

Project proposals must identify **one primary Focus Area**. Additional Focus Areas may be selected if relevant.

Definitions

At each Una Europa partner, ‘established researcher’ is defined as:

- FUB – Full professors, junior professors, extraordinary professors, associate professors (*Akad. Rat*), junior research group leaders (*Nachwuchsgruppenleiter*);
- UNIBO – Full professors (Professori ordinari - PO), associate professors (Professori Associati - PA), and researchers (Ricercatori Universitari – RU, Ricercatori a tempo determinato di tipo B - RTDB, Ricercatori Tenure Track – RTT). Additionally, Ricercatori a tempo determinato di tipo A- RTDA are eligible, provided their contract remains valid for the entire duration of the Seed Funding project;
- UCD – Academic staff, excluding postdoctoral, with a university contract to cover the proposed project;
- UoE – Academic staff, excluding postdoctoral, with university contracts;
- UH – Levels 3 and 4 (university lecturer and clinical instructor; university researcher, senior researcher, research coordinator and curator; academy research fellows; assistant/associate professor – tenure track; and professor, research director and senior curator);
- JU – University lecturer (*adiunkt*), associate professor (*profesor uczelniany*), full professor (*profesor*);
- LU – Full professors, associate professors and/or assistant professors, with university contracts;
- KUL – For the statute of the applicants the same regulations apply as for [KU Leuven Internal Funds](#);
- UCM – Full professor (*Catedrático*), professor (*Professor titular*) and permanent professors (*Profesor contratado doctor*);
- Paris 1 – *Professeur, Maître de Conférences, Directeur de Recherche* and *Chargé de Recherche*;
- UZH – Assistant professors (with/without tenure track), associate professors, full professors.

The research team

The **research team** prepares the **project proposal** and is responsible for the **realisation of the project**. The project proposal outlines the vision and specific activities of the project.

The **PI**, with support of the coordinating university, **oversees the project**, is responsible for **receiving and distributing the funds**, and for **reporting on the project outcomes**. The PI also **submits the project proposal** via the online application system.

Example of activities

Activities can lay the foundation for collaboration across education, research and innovation, and/or outreach. Examples include:

- Preparation of joint modules or teaching units based on innovative teaching strategies
- Organisation of research and/or educational seminars and/or winter or summer schools
- Organisation of PhD workshops or other joint doctoral activity
- Development of research teams with a view to e.g. preparing joint proposals for external funding or joint publications
- Organisation of activities that contribute to development of early-career researchers, e.g. mentoring schemes
- Organisation of congresses or conferences to disseminate the project's activity
- Engagement with the non-academic sector, e.g. community-based research, entrepreneurship and start-up initiatives, public outreach and science communication.

Contributing to the Interdisciplinary Hubs

The Interdisciplinary Hubs are virtual interinstitutional centres for the development of interdisciplinary research, education and outreach in the six Una Europa Focus Areas. The hubs are open to all Una Europa academics (from PhDs, early-career researchers to established researchers), professional services staff and students who want to engage in or enhance international collaboration in the framework of Una Europa.

The objective is to broaden and deepen the involvement of a growing number of academics in the Una Europa Focus Areas, connect more widely into the partner institutions (i.e. different faculties) and position the Hubs as internationally renowned fora for interdisciplinary research, education and outreach. Contributions to and links with the Hubs can be demonstrated in several ways.

Some examples include:

- Addressing the Focus Area's priorities as outlined in the information sheets in the proposal (see links on page 1)
- Keeping the Hub's Chair informed about the project
- Offering a short presentation at the start and end of the project to the Hub's members
- Liaising and aligning on dissemination of project information, progress, and results with the Hub's communication strategies

Summary

Goal	- To contribute to the development of interdisciplinary hubs for education, research and innovation, and/or societal outreach in one or more of the six Una Europa Focus Areas
Budget	- Max. € 30.000 - 8 projects funded
Eligibility	Minimum: - 1 PI at Una Europa University 1 - 1 Academic Lead at Una Europa University 2 - 1 Academic Lead at Una Europa University 3 - 1 Focus Area
Encouraged	- Additional Una Europa Universities with 1 Academic Lead per partner - Other Una Europa academics, students and professional staff - Third parties (at own cost) - Sustainable cooperation formats with clear potential to attract third-party funding

Eligibility check of applications

The eligibility check is carried out by the Una Europa Seed Funding Team who verifies that:

- each proposal involves at least three Una Europa partner universities
- the PI and Academic Leads are affiliated with Una Europa and meet the definition of Established Researcher for their institution
- the budget complies with the maximum € 30.000 and financial guidelines
- endorsement letters and CVs are complete
- the proposed activities fall within the eligible timeframe

Applicants will be contacted to correct minor issues either before sharing the proposal with the Selection Committee or after the funding decision depending on the nature of the issue. Proposals with major eligibility issues – such as an insufficient number of universities, ineligible PI or Academic Leads or budgets falling outside the permitted scope – may be rejected without the possibility of correction.

Evaluation of applications

An interdisciplinary selection committee consisting of experts from Una Europa universities will rank eligible proposals for funding on a competitive basis. The selection committee has representation of strategic alliance governance groups. In an ideal scenario, proposals are evaluated by three experts. If this is not possible due to the large number of proposals received, each proposal will be evaluated by a minimum of two experts.

Experts act as generalists across disciplines and Focus Areas. Applicants are therefore strongly advised to write their proposal in a clear and accessible manner, ensuring that the objectives, methodology, activities and expected outcomes can be understood by reviewers without specialised knowledge of the topic.

Proposals will be evaluated taking into account the following criteria.

Quality (weighting of 40%)	Impact (weighting of 30%)	Implementation (weighting of 30%)
- Clarity and relevance of the project's objectives and the extent to which these objectives align with those of this call and selected Focus Area(s). - The extent to which the proposed work is ambitious. - Soundness of the proposed methodology including innovative, interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches. - The extent to which the proposal addresses the Mission of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Una Europa. - Strength and diversity of the team.	- Credibility of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts specified in the work plan, and the likely scale and significance of the contributions from the project. - Strong involvement of students, mid- and early-career researchers in the project activities. - Impact on the broad Una Europa partnership, including number of Una Europa universities involved, number of researchers, professional staff and students involved. - Capacity to involve external stakeholders and attract external funding in the long term. - Alignment with and contribution to Una Europa strategies and Focus Areas, including but not limited to the Una Europa 2030 Strategy.	- Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, and assessment of risks. - Appropriateness of the effort assigned to different activities, and the resources overall. - The extent to which the proposed budget benefits each partner and the consortium as a whole. - Compliance with standard norms and ethical practices. - Contribution of additional financial or in-kind resources to the project.

Experts use the following rubric for scoring each of the criteria outlined above. Proposals awarded a score of less than 60 in any of the criteria based on the average scoring of all experts for that proposal, are not put forward for funding.

Category	Explanation	Score range
Poor	The criterion is addressed in an inadequate manner, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.	0-50
Fair	The proposal addresses the criterion well, although improvements would be necessary.	50-65
Good/ Very Good	The proposal addresses the criterion very well, although certain improvements are still possible.	65-90
Excellent	The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question. Any shortcomings are minor.	90-100

Applicants of unsuccessful but eligible proposals will receive their scores for each criterion; quality, impact and implementation. They will also receive the quartile their score is situated in in relation to all eligible proposals. No written feedback will be provided.

The full evaluation policy for Una Europa Seed Funding calls may be consulted [here](#).

Funding and financial procedures

The overall total budget for the 2026 call for proposals is € 240.000, with a maximum budget of € 30.000 per project. The allocation of funding depends on the overall evaluation and ranking of proposals carried out by the Selection Committee based on the criteria mentioned above.

The transfers of grants to successful projects will be carried out at the start of the project.

Each activity may give rise to the award of only one grant. There can be no double funding of the same activity.

The Seed Funding should not be used to cover permanent staff costs i.e. personnel costs of the partners involved. Covering temporary staff costs or subcontracting for specific tasks is allowed. Mobility may be budgeted using Una Europa's unit costs for travel, accommodation and daily allowance. Please refer to Annex 1 on funding and financial procedures for more details and guidelines on how to put together the project's budget.

The final decision-making for the funding of projects lies with the Board of Directors of Una Europa vzw.

Submission and deadlines

Proposals should be submitted by the PI in English via the online application system. The application consists of an **application form** including **endorsement letters** for the Principal Investigator and each Academic Lead signed by the respective Dean or Faculty or Department Head, or legal representative in line with internal university procedures. Through the endorsement letter the respective Dean, Faculty or Department Head or legal representative confirms that the Faculty or Department supports the proposal and that the applicant from the respective Faculty or Department complies with the eligibility criteria as mentioned in this call document.¹ The legal representative may not be the same as the endorsed researcher.

The project description should be concise and should include a clear **description of the vision**, the **proposed activities**, as well as the **budget** and **timeframe** for these activities.

Please click the following links to access the:

- [Online application form](#)
- [Endorsement letter template](#)
- [Budget template](#)

The deadline for proposals to the 2026 call is 28 January 2027, at 17:00 CET.

The **duration** of the project can be up to **one year**. The proposed activities should be conducted between **1 September 2027 and 31 August 2028**.

Reporting on projects

Beneficiaries will be requested to submit a project report focusing on project outcomes, after the project is concluded. Una Europa vzw will not request any tickets or proof for the costs related to the project. However, there will be an opportunity to declare and transfer back any unspent funds. Underspending of up to 5% is allowed and does not have to be transferred back.

Successful applicants will be provided with a template for reporting.

¹ Please note that some Una Europa universities have internal procedures and applicants are therefore encouraged to reach out to their local contacts (see Annex 2) as soon as possible when considering applying for Seed Funding. Please consult the FAQs for more information.

Expression of interest

Any Una Europa researcher interested in applying may optionally fill out [an expression of interest form](#) in order to find potential collaborators. The deadline for filling out the form is **26 November 2026**.

The aim of the form is to create an expressions of interest list. The list containing all expressions will be shared once with the researchers who submitted a form and in the closed LinkedIn group of the call. The list will also be shared with relevant actors within the Una Europa internal community to support the match-making process to the extent possible. However, providing personalised support for each expression of interest is not feasible.

Confidentiality and data protection

Until there is a funding decision, the application files and any information related to them remain strictly confidential. The application files or any related information are only accessible for the Una Europa Seed Funding team and the Selection Committee. The Una Europa Board of Directors receive the necessary information with a view to making the funding decision and are also bound by confidentiality.

After the funding decision and confirmation to launch the projects, top-line data on the successful projects will be publicly shared in line with the project factsheets in the [database of seed funded projects on the Una Europa website](#).

Top-line data on the proposals on the reserve list will be shared with staff from the Una Europa universities on request. These data include: project title, acronym, related Focus Area, coordinating university, name PI, email PI, other universities involved. The reserve list will not be publicly available. PIs on the reserve list have the option to opt out from sharing any data.

PIs of proposals that are unsuccessful in applying for this call for proposals are encouraged to reach out to their local Una Europa contacts (see Annex 2). These contacts may provide support for resubmission or other Una Europa opportunities. All data on unsuccessful proposals is treated with strict confidentiality and will not be circulated by the Una Europa Seed Funding Team.

About Una Europa

Una Europa is an alliance of 11 leading universities from all corners of Europe. Together, they are forging a new path for education and research in Europe and beyond to shape our shared future for the better. The Una Europa community spans more than half a million students, 100,000 members of staff and 10 languages, grounded in over 1,000 years.

Una Europa universities:

Freie Universität Berlin | Alma mater studiorum - Università di Bologna | University College Dublin/An Coláiste Ollscoile Baile Átha Cliath | University of Edinburgh | Helsingin yliopisto/Helsingfors universitet | Uniwersytet Jagielloński w Krakowie | Universiteit Leiden | KU Leuven | Universidad Complutense de Madrid | Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne | Universität Zürich

Founded in 2019, Una Europa has secured successive rounds of European Union funding to realise its vision for a European 'University of the Future'. In just three years, the alliance's pilot project succeeded in launching nine joint programmes – including Europe's first truly joint bachelor's degree – transcending boundaries of discipline, institution, and country to take international collaboration to the next level. The alliance has also taken its first steps towards a common research ecosystem underpinned by a shared research and innovation agenda.

Guided by its 2030 Strategy, Una Europa is working towards a truly inter-university and pan-European campus, shaped by universities' universal and fundamentally interwoven obligations to society: research and innovation, teaching and learning, and societal outreach.

Annex 1 Funding and Financial procedures

The overall total budget for the 2026 call for proposals is € 240.000, with a maximum budget of € 30.000 per project. The allocation of funding depends on the overall evaluation and ranking of proposals carried out by the Selection Committee based on the evaluation criteria.

If the project proposal is evaluated successfully, but the budget does not fully comply with the financial procedures or if the Selection Committee had any feedback on the budget specifically, the PI will be requested to update the budget in the grant preparation phase.

Upon signature of the grant letter, the entire grant will be transferred to the coordinating university who then distributes it to the project partners according to the outlined budget. The Principle Investigator (PI) may receive support for the administration of the project from the institution in question according to their internal procedures. Information on the finances will be stipulated in the grant letter and the approved project budget will be annexed to this grant letter.

How to put together the project's budget

The format of the budget should be detailed enough to demonstrate how the finances will be divided between the partners. Please use the provided [template](#) by filling out one sheet per partner and one overview sheet. In the case that the budget will be managed centrally by the coordinating university with no budget being transferred to the partners, it should be clearly mentioned in the proposal and budget. In this case it is sufficient to fill out one sheet for the coordinating university.

Permanent staff costs, as well as activities duplicated by funding that is otherwise available, are considered ineligible costs.

Please note that researchers or staff from other universities than the partners indicated in the proposal may only benefit from the project funding in exceptional and justified cases, e.g. travel costs for an external speaker that can provide specific expertise that is not available among the partners indicated in the proposal.

Unit costs for mobility

Fixed amounts are stipulated for **travel** costs, **accommodation** and **daily allowances** depending on the destination. These amounts shall be used at budget proposal and planning stage.

While unit costs for mobility must be used at application stage, funded projects retain full flexibility during implementation to adjust their planned mobilities. This includes the possibility to increase or reduce the number of trips, modify their duration, or change the distribution of mobilities between partners, as long as the total awarded budget is respected and changes are in line with the project's objectives.

Projects may also reallocate budget between different cost categories (e.g., between travel, accommodation, daily allowances or other eligible costs) if actual needs differ from the original plan.

The **accommodation** allowance may be used for **each night** of the trip. The **daily allowance** may be used **for each full day** of the trip. For the **first and last travel day**, **50%** of the indicated daily allowance unit cost shall be used.

The **daily allowance** covers costs related to meals and other incidental costs for each day of the trip. In case the project wishes to organize a joint meal, the allowances should be adjusted accordingly for those participating. Only then can the actual cost for the joint meal be included under 'other costs'.

- Joint breakfast: Reduction of daily allowance by maximum 20%
- Joint lunch: Reduction of daily allowance by maximum 35%
- Joint dinner: Reduction of daily allowance by maximum 45%

The **travel unit costs** are calculated based on the distance between origin and destination (single trip). This should be the shortest and most efficient route possible. The arrival to and departure from the location of the activity should be maximum one day before or one day after the scheduled activity. Personal travel before or after the funded mobility

is allowed, but no unit costs for accommodation nor daily allowance can be budgeted for those days. Distances may be calculated using the [Erasmus+ Distance Calculator](#).

Travel unit costs

Travel distances origin - destination (in km)	Travel budget per return trip	Travel budget per return trip for sustainable travel
10-99	n.a.	€ 56
100-499	€ 285	€ 285
500-1999	€ 309	€ 417
2000-2999	€ 395	€ 535
3000-3999	€ 580	€ 785
4000-7999	€ 1.188	€ 1.188
8000 and more	€ 1.735	€ 1.735

Accommodation and daily allowance unit costs

Destination	Accommodation	Daily Allowance
Alma mater studiorum Università di Bologna (UNIBO)	€ 150	€ 100
Freie Universität Berlin (FUB)	€ 130	€ 95
University College Dublin	€ 150	€ 110
University of Edinburgh	€ 150	€ 125
Helsingin yliopisto (The University of Helsinki)	€ 140	€ 115
Uniwersytet Jagielloński w Krakowie	€ 115	€ 65
KU Leuven	€ 150	€ 100
Universidad Complutense de Madrid	€ 130	€ 90
Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne	€ 150	€ 100
Universiteit Leiden	€ 150	€ 105
Universität Zürich	€ 150	€ 125
<i>Other destinations</i>	<i>Applicants are requested to define and justify the rates for any other destination themselves and apply them equally for all project partners traveling to that destination.</i>	

Sustainable travel

Sustainable travel is defined as travel that uses low-emissions means of transport for the main part of the travel, such as bus, train, car-pooling or ferry. Travel bookings should follow the local travel policies of the universities participating. Una Europa vzw appreciates and encourages efforts in relation to using sustainable options for travel. An additional travel day per one way travel may be included in the budget and higher unit costs may be applied to cover costs related to sustainable travel. (see table above)

Check some proposed sustainable travel routes between Una Europa cities via the [Sustainable Travel Tool](#).

Actual costs

For costs beyond those that are mobility-related an **estimation** should be included in the budget under 'other costs'. It is advised to be **as specific as possible** when describing these costs in the budget, in order for the Selection Committee and Seed Funding team to understand what will be purchased. The inclusion of a separate **contingency fund** is not allowed.

Inclusion support may also be included under this section. The inclusion support may cover all extra costs associated to a person's disability so that they can fully participate in the project, e.g. adapted accommodation, travel assistance, medical attendance, supportive equipment etc.

The **organization of joint meals** should be fully covered by part of the daily allowance of its participants as indicated above. The relevant part of the daily allowance should be taken out for the actual cost of a joint meal to be included under 'other costs'. **Catering costs for coffee breaks** may be included as actual costs.

If the budget for actual costs is underestimated, please note that Una Europa vzw cannot fund more than the granted budget for the project.

Subcontracting and temporary staff costs

If the project partners are unable to accomplish certain tasks required to successfully implement the project, those tasks may be assigned to **subcontractors** or to **internal university services**. However, it is not foreseen that these tasks cover primary activities of the project. Primary activities are defined as the core research, teaching or outreach activities of the project. Subcontracting may only be used for supporting or specialised tasks that cannot be performed by the project partners. Mobility costs for **external speakers** may be covered under subcontracting where this is clearly justified in the proposal.

Subcontracting needs should be identified and described at proposal stage, as procurement procedures at partner universities may require advance preparation.

The budget spent on subcontracting and temporary staff costs may not be more than **20% of the total budget**.

Project reporting, amendments and unspent funds

Una Europa vzw **does not request financial reporting**; beneficiaries are required to submit **only a written report on the project outcomes** after completion of the project. Beneficiaries should, however, be aware that their home institution may still require internal financial reporting in line with local procedures. Any amendments to the project's activities or budget during implementation should be agreed among all project partners and must remain consistent with the project goals set out in the proposal. Una Europa vzw does not need to be notified in advance of such amendments.

To accommodate partner universities that must formally close project accounts, **beneficiaries may declare and return any unspent funds**. However, detailed accounting is not required by Una Europa vzw, and if all planned activities have been completed, it is acceptable that no unspent funds are declared.

Annex 2 Local contacts for Seed Funding

University	Staff member/Department	E-mail
Freie Universität Berlin (FUB)	Una Europa Team FU Berlin	unaeuropa@zedat.fu-berlin.de
Alma mater studiorum Università di Bologna (UNIBO)	Una Europa Team UNIBO	una.europa@unibo.it
University College Dublin	Shane Lordan, Global Networks & Projects Manager	unaeuropa@ucd.ie
University of Edinburgh	Una Europa Team University of Edinburgh	una.europa@ed.ac.uk
Helsingin yliopisto (The University of Helsinki)	Una Europa Team Helsinki	una.europa@helsinki.fi
Uniwersytet Jagielloński w Krakowie	Una Europa Team JU	seedfundinguna@uj.edu.pl
Universiteit Leiden	Ms. Marielle Veldhuizen van Zanten, Project Officer	una-europa@bb.leidenuniv.nl
KU Leuven	Una Europa Team KU Leuven	una-europa@kuleuven.be
Universidad Complutense de Madrid	Una Europa Team UCM	una-europa.sll@ucm.es and una-europa@ucm.es
Université Paris 1 Panthéon- Sorbonne	Ms. Séverine Bortot, Director - Direction des projets et de la prospective (D2P)	D2p@univ-paris1.fr
Universität Zürich	Una Europa team University of Zurich	una.europa@global.uzh.ch