

New funding schemes and increased budgets to promote discovery research

Calls with increased budgets and with new funding schemes better tailored to researchers' career stages have been announced by the National Research, Development and Innovation Office to promote discovery research in Hungary. The total budget of calls for project proposals in the field of fundamental research has increased to HUF 12 billion (EUR 39 million) this year.

"Hungary needs smart innovation to be competitive, and that can be fuelled by world-class discovery research too. In order for the domestic basic research workshops to be internationally competitive it is crucial to have a sustainable and predictable system of public funding programmes which enables outstanding researchers to implement their scientific projects in Hungarian research centres," József Pálincás, President of the NRDI Office pointed out in relation to the announced calls.

The schemes of the competitive funding system introduced this year to promote discovery research help already successful research centres initiate new projects, allow additional support for young researchers to establish own research groups in addition to the postdoctoral fellowships programme developed in 2016, and facilitates domestic discovery research projects to move to the international stage. After last year's growth the total budget available for researcher-initiated thematic applications has been increased by another HUF 1 billion to HUF 8 billion (EUR 26.3 million), which is completed by another HUF 1.5 billion (nearly EUR 5 million) in the framework of a similar scheme for young researchers and HUF 1 billion (EUR 3.3 million) for thematic applications involving international cooperation. The postdoctoral excellence programme has also been announced with a total budget of HUF 1.5 billion (nearly EUR 5 million), available for researchers under 40 years of age with a doctoral degree to cover wage-like costs and thus strengthen scientific workshops in Hungary.

- The Call for researcher-initiated thematic applications (K_17) is open for discovery research projects of Hungarian research centres in any field of science without thematic priorities. The call aims to strengthen researcher creativity and excellence, and facilitates the implementation of researcher-initiated projects which are expected to provide more insight into various natural and social phenomena, extend the knowledge of humanity, and deliver results which pave the way for new methods and procedures.
- The NRDI Office specifically supports young researchers in establishing their independent research groups in Hungary within the framework of its "Call for thematic applications initiated by young researchers" (FK_17), which is open for professionals younger than 40 years. In designing the new call, the Office used the experience gained from the discovery research call in 2016 (K_16) where a high number of project proposals were submitted by professionals at the early stage of their researcher career.
- The Call for thematic applications involving international cooperation (NN_17) promotes cooperation between domestic research groups and their foreign partners, strengthening the international embeddedness of Hungarian science and supporting - by a separate subprogramme within - basic research projects which involve Hungarian-Austrian or Hungarian-Slovenian cooperation.
- The Call for postdoctoral applications (PD_17), which was [redesigned last year](#) and announced this year again, is an essential part of the research funding system offering long-term career opportunities for researchers as it provides funding for the wage-like costs of researchers from Hungarian institutes and the related taxes payable by the employer. To seek funding for their independent research projects, postdoctoral researchers can apply under the calls K_17 and FK_17, and - if the project is implemented in international cooperation - under call NN_17 this year.

Last year altogether 1145 researcher-initiated thematic project proposals were submitted to the NRDI Office, in four areas of scientific fields (Humanities and Social Sciences; Mathematical, Physical, Chemical and Engineering Sciences; Medical and Biological Sciences; Agricultural, Ecological and Earth Sciences). [The willingness to apply for funding has increased](#) since the past few years: the total demand for funds neared HUF 34 billion (EUR 111 million) which is a 42% increase compared to 2015, and 62% compared to 2014. The share of younger applicants has increased by nearly two and a half times, which added another reason for announcing a separate call targeted to young researchers this year.