



## **5<sup>th</sup> Collaborative European Freshwater Science Project for Young Researchers, “(FreshProject)” - Call for Proposals**

We invite proposals for a project to be supported by the European Federation of Freshwater Sciences (EFFS). The call has been developed as a joint effort of the EFFS board and the EFFS Federated Societies, and the European Fresh and Young Researchers (EFYR). It has the primary goals of: a) encouraging early career freshwater researchers (ECRs), who are members of any national society affiliated with the EFFS (see details in the section “Who is eligible”) to create collaborations that lead to new knowledge and lasting connections among their peers, b) promoting networking among ECRs and, c) offering the option to gain experience in generating research ideas, acquiring funding, planning and carrying out a collaborative international scientific project, and collaborating in large diverse and international teams.

Collaborative projects combine research with networking and thus can be very valuable for researchers, especially for ECRs without a lot of prior experience. The Collaborative European Freshwater Science Projects (hereafter FreshProject-FPs) for ECRs are an excellent opportunity to get to know and work with people who share similar circumstances and concerns, all of which are part of the future generation of freshwater scientists in Europe. Previously, four FPs were successfully conducted:

- EURORUN; bringing together 47 ECRs across 11 European countries investigating CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes from 34 European streams (<https://freshproject-eurorun.jimdofree.com/> )
- Urban Algae; where nearly 100 ECRs joined forces to sample urban ponds covering 5 biogeographical regions within Europe and creating a citizen science survey to investigate the perception of urban ponds (<https://freshproject-urbanalgae.jimdofree.com/> )

- EUROPONDS; which had 68 ECRs from 16 European countries sampling emerging insects from ponds and analyzing their biomass exports and fatty acid compositions (<https://europonds.jimdofree.com/> )
- PhytoPlastic; within which 45 ECRs took part in a large-scale experiment addressing the mechanisms governing microalgal colonization of plastic debris in European lakes at different latitudes. This project is still ongoing. (<https://phytoplastic.wixsite.com/>)

Proposals submitted to the present call should specify original research on any aspect of the ecology of inland waters. We will favor proposals which implement two aspects: (i) research relying on the original and well-designed use of inexpensive and simple methodology, (ii) multidisciplinary and inclusive interactions among European ECRs. Thus, the evaluation will consider not only the scientific quality of the proposal, but especially the chances for promoting collaboration and networking among European ECRs. The focus on the collaborative approach, which can include the organization of workshops, should be integrated into the initial proposal and executed during the entire project duration. This is an equal opportunity call, which is open to all early career members of the limnological societies constituting EFFS. The EFFS-federated societies listed below financially support this programme and kindly encourage the participation of their early career members. ECRs that are affiliated with any of the EFFS-federated societies can submit a project proposal and/or participate in the awarded project.

### **Who is eligible?**

Researchers at Masters, PhD, or Post-Doc level up until 3 years can submit proposals and participate in the selected project. To guarantee fair opportunities and avoid gender discriminations, career breaks (e.g., parental leave) will be taken into consideration. The proposers need to be members of one of the limnological societies within EFFS (the list of federated societies is available at <http://www.freshwatersciences.eu/effs/index.asp?page=MEMBERS&Id=3>) at the time when the call closes (5th September, 2024). Once the awarded project has been selected, the final team has to be assembled from ECRs responding to a public call inviting the ECRs affiliated with any of the EFFS-federated societies and must include at least one participant affiliated with each of the funding societies listed in the section “Budget” of this document to receive the full funding sum available from that given by the respective funding society.

## **Duration of the project**

The project should be completed within two years after signing the grant agreement (see details in the section “Once the proposal is selected: Team assembly”). Publication of scientific outputs is not required within this time frame although realistic timelines for publication should be part of the proposal and the final report. If the team decides to publish their results in an open-access journal, albeit not mandatory, the publication fee should be covered by the available budget or waived by the journal upon negotiation.

## **Budget**

The potential budget available for this 5th call is 10,150 euros (VAT included), which could be supplemented by funds provided by the participants or their institutions. This budget covers consumables and travel expenses, conference fees and publication costs. Salaries and non-consumable materials cannot be paid by the funded budget. As mentioned above, the final team must include at least one participant affiliated to each of the 11 EFFS-Federated funding Societies, which are the following:

- Association Française de Limnologie (France). Contribution: 1,000 €.
- Association of Austrian SIL-Members (Austria). Contribution: 500€.
- Associazione Italiana di Oceanologia e Limnologia (Italy). Contribution: 750 €.
- Asociación Ibérica de Limnología / Associação Ibérica de Limnologia (Spain and Portugal). Contribution: 2,000 €.
- Česká limnologická společnost (Czech Republic). Contribution: 1,000 €.
- Deutsche Gesellschaft für Limnologie e.V. (Germany). Contribution: 1,500 €.
- Freshwater Biological Association (United Kingdom). Contribution: 1,000 €.
- Hrvatsko Udruženje Slatkovodnih Ekologa (Croatia). Contribution: 500 €.
- Irish Freshwater Sciences Association (Ireland). Contribution: 500 €.
- Magyar Hidrológiai Társaság (Hungary). Contribution: 400 €.
- Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Hydrologie und Limnologie / Société Suisse d'Hydrologie et de Limnologie / Società Svizzera di Idrologia e Limnologia (Switzerland). Contribution: 1,000 €.

If there is one society which has no participant in the final project team, the budget available may be reduced by the amount contributed by that society.

The project budget could be increased by funds raised directly by the PIs and members of the project (for instance by external collaborations waiving analytical costs). Anyhow, in all cases, EFFS and its federated funding societies must be acknowledged as the main founders and promoters of the FP. These external collaborations could, however, be acknowledged, in addition to that of the EFFS-federated societies, in papers and reports resulting from the FP.

### **Application rules**

Each ECR can only submit one project proposal. However, each project can have up to three proposing investigators (PIs; preferably, but not exclusively, from different countries/affiliated societies), who will lead the project. The PIs and any number of co-investigators make up the final project team. The PIs will be in charge of managing the project funds and must report the main results and account of expenses to EFFS periodically (every 3 months) by a short writing report. A final complete report is expected at the end of the project.

ECRs from across Europe will be invited to join the winning project once awarded, but the proposing investigators can also provide a list of potentially interested participants from different European countries in their proposal. The PIs must be members of any of the EFFS affiliated societies, but as mentioned above, in order to receive the total sum available, the final team must include at least one participant affiliated to each funding society. In addition, other early career scientists from these or any other EFFS-federated societies can participate in the final team. The PIs should, in any case, contact the EFFS-federated society to which these potential participants declare to be affiliated to ensure their effective affiliation.

### **How to apply**

Early career researchers interested in applying, should prepare a Project Proposal and send it by e-mail to the contact persons listed below with “EFFS Early Career Freshwater Project” in the subject line. This proposal will be made available to the EFFS-federated society to which they are affiliated by the EFFS chairperson through the EFFS-Board representatives. The name of the Project Proposal file should include the first initial and last name of the proposing investigator (e.g. “FreshProject\_ASilva” or “FreshProject\_ASilva+WJohnson” without spaces or accents, with the 1st

letter of each word in caps). The project proposal should be written in English, and submitted as a single file containing the following sections:

- Title of the project, name(s) and affiliation(s) of the PI(s), plus up to five keywords.
- Project abstract in English (maximum length 3,000 characters including spaces, minimum font size 11pt).
- Project abstract in any official language of the EFFS-Federated Society to which the PI(s) is/are affiliated (maximum length 3,000 characters including spaces, minimum font size 11pt).
- State of the art (maximum length 5,000 characters including spaces, minimum font size 11pt).
- Methods and development of the project, including project tasks and timetable (maximum length 20,000 characters including spaces, minimum font size 11pt).
- Impact of the project (maximum length 5,000 characters including spaces, minimum font size 11pt)
- Mandatory annexes are: (i) letter(s) testifying that the proposing investigator(s) has (have) the support from the host(s) institution(s) to carry out the project (ii) letter(s) of the EFFS-federated society to which they are affiliated testifying that the proposing investigator(s) are recognized as members of such society (iii) CV of the applicant(s). The annexes should be merged at the end of the project proposal.

The EFFS chairperson and/or the EFYR representatives will acknowledge receipt of the application within three working days.

- To answer questions before the submission and help with the preparation of the proposal and the project management plan, two webinars will be organized before the deadline by EFYR and PIs of previous FreshProjects. The first webinar will represent an opportunity to learn more about FPs and clarify any potential doubts on eligibility and proposal preparation, and will be held by the 24<sup>th</sup> July, 2024. The second webinar will instead be more focused on the actual structure of the proposal and the project management plan and this will be held by the 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2024. ECRs who are interested to attend to the webinars should fill the following google module (<https://forms.gle/Hce9VZ5DM8Q2Z7Rc7>) with the required information or contact the EFYR representatives Vanessa De Santis ([vanessa.desantis@irsa.cnr.it](mailto:vanessa.desantis@irsa.cnr.it)) and Lena Fehlinger ([lenaandrea.fehlinger@uvic.cat](mailto:lenaandrea.fehlinger@uvic.cat)), to receive further information.

## **Submission deadline**

The deadline for the submission of projects is 11:59 pm (GMT) of 5th September 2024, with the time of the e-mail header as proof of date. The applications must be sent simultaneously to Simon Johnson (EFFS Chairperson) [sjohnson@fba.org.uk](mailto:sjohnson@fba.org.uk) as well as to the following EFYR representatives: Vanessa De Santis ([vanessa.desantis@irsa.cnr.it](mailto:vanessa.desantis@irsa.cnr.it)); Lena Fehlinger ([lenaandrea.fehlinger@uvic.cat](mailto:lenaandrea.fehlinger@uvic.cat)). After the submission deadline, all applications will be assembled and sent to the members of the panel for evaluation.

## **Evaluation criteria**

The panel will be constituted by members (usually five) nominated by the EFFS and EFYR boards, without any link with the presented projects. Applications submitted will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

A. Scientific merit and innovation (up to 40 points): Relevance to wider society and originality of the project proposed. Methodology for carrying out the project, including available instrumental resources at the centers where the research will be performed. Hypotheses to be tested and contribution to scientific knowledge.

B. The potential for interactions among young European researchers in different scientific disciplines and for enabling a balanced representation of participants from differing geographical, cultural and gender backgrounds (up to 40 points).

C. Feasibility of the work-plan: Organization of the project in terms of the proposed objectives and resources (up to 20 points).

Only one project will be selected.

The decision of the panel will be announced no later than 4th October, 2024, and sent by e-mail to all young researchers who have submitted a project, and on the EFFS website. The titles of

proposals that were not funded will be published as well. Applicants may also receive an evaluation report addressing the criteria mentioned above just for their own proposal. The decision of the panel is final.

### **Once the proposal is selected: Team assembly**

In order to reach out to early career researchers (ECRs) across Europe that may want to join the project, an invitation will be sent out via existing emailing lists of the different EFFE-Federated societies, as well as via the EFYR network. Social media will be used to further advertise the project. ECRs wishing to participate should write a short confirmation letter affirming that they are willing and able to participate in the project following the terms described in the proposal, also including the name of the EFFE-federated society to which they are affiliated, which has to be checked by the PIs and confirmed by the respective secretary of the respective EFFE-federated society. Instructions on how to proceed to participate will be given in the invitation email. ECRs meeting the eligibility criteria must contact the PIs of the project, who will assess if the interested researcher qualifies to join the team according to the call rules. The final project team should be assembled preferably by 30th October, 2024. PIs of the awarded project must establish an internal procedure to ensure the active participation of all members of the teams during the whole project length. Non-active members might be excluded from the team upon consultation with EFFE and the EFFE-federated society to which they are affiliated. After the project team is created, the grant agreement will be signed and the project will develop as specified in the Proposal Form, under the leadership of the PIs. The final amount to develop the project will be transferred directly from the funding societies to a specific bank account created for this purpose by the PIs. The PIs must deliver a specific funding receipt to each of the funding societies, and a financial report must be sent to EFFE in each of the years of project development, plus a final financial report for the whole project once finished.

### **Dissemination of results**

The PIs of the awarded project must deliver a short report on the project development to the EFFE chairperson every 3 months during the term of the project, that will be released to the EFFE-Federated societies and the EFFE Board (including EFYR).

A final report, sufficiently detailed to reflect all results and conclusions, should be submitted by the PIs via email to the EFFE Chairperson (Simon Johnson, [sjohnson@fba.org.uk](mailto:sjohnson@fba.org.uk)), within three months of the end of the project. The report should have a maximum length of 20,000 characters with spaces and minimum font size 11pt, including Figures and Tables. This should also specify expected deadlines for dissemination (publication) of scientific outputs and detailed justification of the project expenses. The report can be distributed by the EFFE-Federated Societies to their members, and will be available after distribution to the Representatives of EFFE-Board as well as on the project webpage.

All active participants in the research will be considered as potential co-authors in the project outputs. At least one scientific paper should be submitted to an international peer-reviewed journal not later than four years after the start of the project, covering complete or partial aspects of the research carried out. Protocols/data sheets generated in the project must be available in public repositories not later than two years after the end of the project.

Among the outputs of the project, an oral presentation of preliminary results must be presented at SEFS-14, to be held in Bolu, Turkey, in 2025, as well as another with the final results at the first meeting of SEFS after the end of project (SEFS-15, to be held in 2027). The EFFE and all funding societies of this call must be acknowledged in any publication, report, and conference presentation. Participants should also set up a website featuring real-time updates on project progress and activities, linked to the EFFE webpage and EFYR social media. Use of other social media and alternative outreach venues to provide visibility for the project and the call and its promoters is encouraged.