

# E<sup>3</sup>UDRES<sup>2</sup> Applied Research Centres of Excellence

## Second open call for prospective centres

### 1. Introduction

This is the second open call for proposals for **prospective** E<sup>3</sup>UDRES<sup>2</sup> Applied Research Centres of Excellence (pCoE) which is open to all researchers from a E<sup>3</sup>UDRES<sup>2</sup> partner university, including the associated partners from Western Balkans and Ukraine<sup>1</sup>.

The pCoE should aim at evolving into E<sup>3</sup>UDRES<sup>2</sup> Applied Research Centre of Excellence.

From the E<sup>3</sup>UDRES<sup>2</sup> Research Strategy, approved by the Executive Board in December 2024, the concept for such Centres is the following:

*“The E<sup>3</sup>UDRES<sup>2</sup> Applied Research Centres of Excellence (CoE) contribute to shape the E<sup>3</sup>UDRES<sup>2</sup> framework for ongoing and upcoming (research) activities. They shall ensure, that excellence efforts in research are best combined and competitiveness and critical mass in research on European level are achieved.*

*They connect researchers from the E<sup>3</sup>UDRES<sup>2</sup> European University alliance who jointly develop outstanding fundamental and applied research, which support and is interlinked with innovation, services and education, in a specific field, within one of E<sup>3</sup>UDRES<sup>2</sup> Focus Areas, to serve as a catalyst for regional development in that field. They are managed according to high levels of efficiency and positive leadership and show financial viability.*

*The CoE will be encouraged to include as many E<sup>3</sup>UDRES<sup>2</sup> partners and associated partners as possible, as well as external partners, to strengthen their European visibility and to enhance their capacity. Not only academic partners, but also local industry partners should be involved in the projects to provide researchers with real-life challenges and ensure knowledge transfer and innovation implementation. They should build on each partner's strengths, looking for an ideal balance between basic research and applied research to unleash their full potential.*

*The concept for the CoE should be developed following the European research and policy trends, to enhance their capacity to operate and be competitive at the European level.*

*The CoE should be continuously committed to promote attractive and sustainable research careers of young researchers. Based on their collaboration in the CoE, the researchers shall stimulate the creation of joint master's and doctorate programmes as well as microcredentials and other training and innovation activities.”*

The concept was further developed in [Milestone 15](#), approved in June 2025 by the E<sup>3</sup>UDRES<sup>2</sup> Executive Board.

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<sup>1</sup> Bohdan Khmelnytskyi National University of Cherkasy (Ukraine): <http://cdu.edu.ua/en/home-en/>

Cherkasy State Business College (Ukraine): <http://csbc.edu.ua/>

Sumy State University (Ukraine): <https://int.sumdu.edu.ua/en/>

Luigj Gurakuqi University of Shkodër (Albania): <https://unishk.edu.al>

Aleksandër Moisiu University of Durrës (Albania): <https://uamd.edu.al>

University of Applied Sciences in Ferizaj (Kosovo): <https://ushaf.net/?lang=en>

## 2. Scope of support under project E<sup>3</sup>UDRES<sup>2</sup> 2.0

Selected proposals will benefit from strategic and developmental support designed to strengthen their research excellence and collaborative capacity. The support will include capacity-building activities, tailored networking and matchmaking opportunities, mentoring from senior representatives across E<sup>3</sup>UDRES<sup>2</sup> bodies, and enhanced visibility and promotion through the alliance's digital platforms and communication channels.

The selected proposals are expected to seek external sources of funding support and to plan their financial sustainability in the long run.

## 3. Timeline for the development of the prospective CoE

This is the second call for prospective CoEs.

For a list of the selected prospective CoEs from the first call, please consult <https://eudres.eu/research-centers>.

Prospective CoEs selected from both calls are evaluated by the end of 2026, according to the methodology described in the [Milestone 15](#), approved by the Executive Board of E<sup>3</sup>UDRES<sup>2</sup> in June 2025 and further detailed in the Deliverable 4.2, currently under development, due in March 2026.

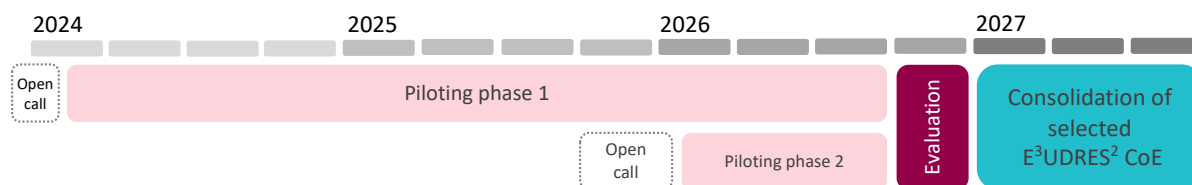


Figure 1 – Timeline for the development of the prospective CoE (from Milestone 15)

## 4. Proposal requirements

For a proposal to be eligible for assessment, these are the following minimum requirements:

### 1) Team

- Must include researchers from at least three E<sup>3</sup>UDRES<sup>2</sup> partner universities;
- Must include at least five acknowledged senior researchers (R3 and/or R4 according to the research career stage<sup>2</sup> established by the European Commission).

<sup>2</sup> The descriptors can be found at <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/career-development/researchers#research-profiles-descriptors>

## 2) **Research plan**

- a) The research plan should align with, at least, one of the E<sup>3</sup>UDRES<sup>2</sup> focus areas<sup>3</sup> and describe how the prospective CoE's proposed applied research can boost the development of the regions where the participating universities are located.

## 3) **Endorsement from the universities**

- a) For at least 3 of the universities in the proposal, a letter of internal endorsement should be attached to the form. These letters should be signed by a designated person at each university (*see table in Section 10 for a list of the designated person at each university and the suggested template made available along with the submission form*).

# 5. How to apply

Submit the Application Form together with the Letters of Endorsement to [office@eudres.eu](mailto:office@eudres.eu).

# 6. Evaluation timeline

The proposals should be submitted by **January 25<sup>th</sup> 2026**.

Results of the evaluation of the proposals should be communicated by February 27<sup>th</sup> 2026.

# 7. Evaluation

The evaluation focuses on the potential to evolve into a CoE.

The proposals will be assessed against the following criteria:

## i) **[40%] Merit of the core team**

Core team of 5 researchers (R3 or R4), from at least 3 partners, showing diversity, complementary expertise and capacity for high level research collaboration.

## ii) **[40%] Feasibility of the research plan**

The proposal should present a well-structured plan, with clear objectives and methodology, feasible given the expertise of the core team, past collaboration – if any – and the research infrastructure already available at the university level.

## iii) **[20%] Potential of regional impact and European added value at an excellent level**

The proposal should demonstrate that the research will be innovative and likely to achieve societal and regional impact and measurable outcomes that strengthen competitiveness at European level.

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<sup>3</sup> The areas in which E<sup>3</sup>UDRES<sup>2</sup> focus, currently: i) Creative Industries for Regions' Identity, ii) Digital Solutions and (Applied) Deep Tech for Regions, iii) Health, Wellbeing and Social Inclusion for Regions, iv) Resilient Economy & Innovation for Regions

In the table depicted in **Figure 2**, a correspondence between each proposal requirement and each criterion and the section from the submission form from where data will be collected is presented.

<b>Proposal requirements</b> (proposals not meeting these requirements will be excluded)		<b>Section(s) from the application form where information for evaluation can be extracted</b>	
Team – at least 5 acknowledged senior researchers (R3 or R4) from at least 3 partner universities		2 (Description of the partnership), 3.1 (Key researchers)	
Research plan – aligned with at least one of the E <sup>3</sup> UDRES <sup>2</sup> focus areas		1.4 (EUDRES focus areas) + 1.7 (Vision and mission) + 4 (Research plan)	
Research plan – how the prospective CoE's applied research can boost the development of the regions where the prospective CoE's universities are located		4 (Research plan)	
Endorsement letters		Should be submitted endorsement letters from at least 3 of the full partner universities	

<b>Evaluation criteria</b>	<b>Merit of the core team (scored 1-5)</b>		<b>40%</b>	<b>Section(s) from the application form where information for evaluation can be extracted</b>
	Key researchers showing diversity and complementary expertise, capacity for high level collaboration			3.1 (Key researchers) + 3.3 (Most impactful contributions) + 3.4 (relevant publications)
	<b>Feasibility of the research plan (scored 1-5)</b>		<b>40%</b>	<b>Section(s) from the application form where information for evaluation can be extracted</b>
	Well-structured plan, with clear objectives and methodology, feasible given the expertise of the core team, past collaboration – if any – and the research infrastructure already available at the university level.			4 (Research plan) + 3.5 (joint past collaboration – OPTIONAL) + 5 (infrastructures – OPTIONAL)
	<b>Potential of regional impact and European added value (scored 1-5)</b>		<b>20%</b>	<b>Section(s) from the application form where information for evaluation can be extracted</b>
	Expected societal and regional impact and expected measurable outcomes that can strengthen competitiveness and show European added value			4 (Research plan)

*Figure 2 – Proposal requirements and evaluation criteria alongside with the sections from the submission form from which data will be collected*

Each criterion will be scored from 1 to 5 according to the table presented in **Figure 3**.

Criterion	Score				
	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Merit of the core team (40%)</b>	Team lacks required partners and senior researchers	Minimal compliance; limited diversity or expertise	Meets basic requirements; moderate experience	Strong team with complementary expertise and experience	Outstanding team; highly experienced in EU projects
<b>Feasibility of the research plan (40%)</b>	Poor quality; unclear objectives	Limited innovation; weak methodology.	Adequate plan; some innovation.	High-quality plan; clear innovation	Exceptional well structured plan with a very clear demonstration of its feasibility
<b>Potential of regional impact and European added value at an excellent level (20%)</b>	Little or no relevance to regional or societal needs, minimal potential for impact	Limited relevance to regional and societal needs, some potential for impact but remains a bit unclear.	Moderate relevance and potential impact and some concrete plans for knowledge transfer or implementation of study results.	Strong regional/societal relevance and clear and achievable impact plan. Active engagement with stakeholders in the region.	Outstanding regional and societal relevance. Well-defined, effective plan for implementation and dissemination. Strong stakeholder engagement regionally and in European level.

*Figure 3 – Scoring table for the evaluation criteria*

## 8. Number of selected proposals and minimum scores

The selection of the prospective CoEs will be done based upon meeting the proposal requirements and the quality of the proposal. There is no maximum number of selected proposals, but successful proposals need to meet minimum scores as given below.

The proposals that reach a score of at least 3 in each of the criteria and a final weighted score of at least 3.5 will be selected.

For the detailed criteria, please see Section 7.

## 9. Evaluation committee

The proposals will be assessed by the E<sup>3</sup>UDRES<sup>2</sup> Scientific Council<sup>4</sup>.

## 10. Designated person to sign endorsement letters

Partner university	Name	Position
HFD	Martina Ritter	Vice President for Research and Transfer
IPS	Luísa Carvalho	Vice-President for Research, Innovation, Internationalisation and Entrepreneurship
JAMK	Mika Karjalainen	Vice-Rector
MATE	István Szabó	Vice-Rector
Saxion	Inge Grimm	Chairman of the Executive Board
UCLL	Pieter Willems	Director R&E
UPT	Liviu Marsavina	Vice-Rector for Research, Innovation and Technological Transfer
USTP	Hannes Raffaseder	CEO
ViA	Andris Klepers	Director of the ViA Research Institute

<sup>4</sup> <https://eudres.eu/scientific-council>