



Guide to proposal preparation 2026

Fellowships for Italy (Pre-Doc; Post-Doc)

Fellowships for Abroad (Pre-Doc; Post-Doc)

FONDAZIONE AIRC

PER LA RICERCA SUL CANCRO ETS

Viale Isonzo 25, 20135 Milano

Tel. +39 02 7797410

E-mail: fellowships.applicationsupport@airc.it

Table of contents

New in 2026	3
How to apply	4
Helpdesk	4
Access to AIRC Projects Administration and Grants Evaluation System (PAGES) website	4
Before starting the application: update “My Profile”	4
General features of PAGES application form	5
Glossary for AIRC Calls for Proposals	5
The application forms in detail	6
1. Applicant’s personal data	6
2. Fellowship title and preferred duration	6
3. Head of the hosting lab	6
4. Legal Representative	7
5. Letter of acceptance by the Hosting Institution	8
6. Personal Statement	9
7. Project keywords	9
8. Abstract and Proposal main body	9
9. GANTT chart	10
10. Declaration on originality of the application	10
11. AIRC Policy on Research Integrity	10
12. Education of the applicant	11
13. Certificate of Master’s degree (Pre-Doc only)	11
14. Certificate of PhD or Specialty (Post-Doc only)	11
15. Applicant’s research and professional experience	11
16. Research interruptions and justifications	12
17. Publications of the applicant	13
18. Patents	14
19. Courses, workshops and additional training	14
20. Participation of the applicant to scientific conferences	14
21. Awards of the applicant	14

22.	Head of the current lab	14
23.	Letter of presentation	15
24.	Collaboration letters	15
25.	Education and training of the head of the hosting lab	15
26.	Research and professional experience of the head of the hosting lab	15
27.	Experience of the head of the hosting lab as a research supervisor	15
28.	Publications of the head of the hosting lab	16
29.	Financial support (only for Fellowships for Abroad)	16
30.	Bio-Ethical Requirements	17
31.	FEA Acceptance ("Firma Elettronica Avanzata")	19
	Proposal Submission	19
	Online submission	19
	Submission of digitally signed application	20

New in 2026

COVID-19

Research interruptions due to COVID-19 are no longer accepted.

APPLICATIONS LIMITATIONS:

Applicants who received a score ≥ 4 in 2025 MFAG presubmission and those categorized as “not eligible for funding” in 2025 Call for Fellowships for Italy cannot apply to any call in 2026.

How to apply

Helpdesk

To get information about the Calls for proposals and support during the application, applicants can contact AIRC at this e-mail address fellowships.applicationsupport@airc.it

Access to AIRC Projects Administration and Grants Evaluation System (PAGES) website

Please visit the website <https://www.direzionescientifica.airc.it/funding-for-research/fellowship/>, select the Call of interest and click on the relevant “apply” button. You will be prompted to login or to register to PAGES.

Researchers who already have an AIRC account

AIRC has recently updated the PAGES system. For this reason, you will need a one-time **migration of your existing account**. Follow the instruction provided [here](#). After the migration, you will be able to login into your AIRC account.

First-time applicants

Only registered users can access the application form. Click on “Need an account? Sign up here (Registration is for applicants only)..

Please provide the requested information (fields in **bold** are mandatory). The registration will be confirmed by e-mail and a username and password will be provided (please note that such e-mail will be sent by AIRC during working hours only). You will then be able to login your AIRC account with your username and password.

Before starting the application: update “My Profile”

To access “My Profile”, please login on your AIRC account: <https://www.pages.airc.it>

You need to **import the information directly from the My Profile section** to fill in a number of forms:



- Research and Professional Experience
- Awards
- Additional courses
- Participation to conferences
- Publications
- Patents

We strongly advise to insert and update the information in My Profile before starting to fill in the application forms; please note that some records already present in My Profile may be outside the applicable time range for data to be included in the application forms.

General features of PAGES application form

- All forms that must be filled out are listed on the left side of the page. Click on each one of them and fill in all the mandatory fields (in bold). **Click on “SAVE” after completing each form;**
- the forms can be filled out in different sessions and the work can be interrupted and resumed at any time;
- a number of forms must be submitted as PDF files. **Files exceeding 4MB and secure PDF files cannot be uploaded.** Documents submitted as PDF files must be written using an A4 portrait format, single-spaced, with margins not less than 2 cm and **a font not smaller than 10 points. Do not exceed the page limit indicated for each section:** the system will not allow the upload of a number of pages beyond the limit;
- the letter of presentation, the letter of acceptance and letters of collaboration (if any), must be signed and uploaded as PDF files. **It is possible to use holographic or digital signatures.** Please note that digital signatures will no longer be visible in the final PDF application; however, the AIRC staff can check the uploaded document for the presence of such digital signatures;
- the **status** of each form is shown on the left;



red cross for mandatory forms that are incomplete



yellow circle for non-mandatory forms



green mark for completed forms

The application must be written **entirely** in English.

Applications that do not conform to all the requirements indicated in these instructions will be rejected.

Glossary for AIRC Calls for Proposals

Principal Investigator	the applicant, also referred to as “PI”
Hosting Institution	the research center, hospital or university where the applicant will be appointed during the fellowship
Hosting lab	the laboratory in the Hosting Institution where the applicant will carry out his/her research activity
Head of the hosting lab	the senior person in charge of supervising the applicant’s research and training activities, also referred to as “Supervisor”
Legal Representative (of the Hosting Institution)	the person with the legal authority to sign documents on behalf of the Hosting Institution
Current lab	the laboratory or unit where the applicant is working at the deadline of this Call

The application forms in detail

To launch the application forms for the first time: Please visit the website <https://www.direzionescientifica.airc.it/funding-for-research/fellowship/>, select the Call of interest and click on the relevant “apply” button. You will be redirected to the login. In the next window, click on “Apply” and subsequently on “Access the application forms”.

To access the application in progress: you will find your ongoing application under “open activities” in the Application session. Click on “Access the application form”.

1. Applicant’s personal data

Most fields are automatically filled out with information provided by the applicant at registration into the AIRC website; to modify the information in any of these fields, please click on “My profile” at the top of the page and edit the text in the Personal data section.

Please provide the applicant’s ORCID identifier. ORCID (Open Researcher and Contributor ID) provides a persistent digital identifier that distinguishes the applicant from every other researcher; for more information, please visit the website <http://orcid.org/>.

2. Fellowship title and preferred duration

In the upper part of the form, please enter the **title of the research proposal**; it must not exceed 120 characters, lowercase, spaces included.

In the lower part of the form, please indicate the **preferred duration** of the fellowship. Please note that the duration of the assigned fellowship may be shorter than the preferred duration indicated by the applicant in the application form.

3. Head of the hosting lab

Fellowships for Italy:

Please insert the Tax Code (“codice fiscale”) or the ORCID ID of the head of the hosting lab, then click on “Search”:

- if the head of the hosting lab is already registered in the AIRC database, his/her name will appear and, by clicking on “Select”, the system will import it in the application form;
- if the head of the hosting lab is not registered in the AIRC database, he/she must create his/her own personal account by clicking on “Register (for applicants only)” at: <https://www.direzionescientifica.airc.it/>. Registration will be confirmed by e-mail and a username and password will be provided. Then the head of the hosting lab will have to login to his/her AIRC account with the username and password and complete the “My profile” section. For questions on the registration procedure, please send an e-mail to fellowships.applicationsupport@airc.it.

Fellowships for Abroad:

Please enter the required information for the Head of the hosting lab.

In **all fellowship** applications, please complete the form by adding:

- **the Hosting Institution:** applicants to Fellowships for Italy must select it from the drop-down menu; If the Hosting Institution is not listed in the menu or some information is not up-to-date, please follow the instructions provided here: <https://www.direzionescientifica.airc.it/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Registration-Hosting-Institution.pdf>. Requests to add a new Hosting Institution must be submitted by April 23 to allow sufficient time for internal administrative procedures. After this date, AIRC cannot guarantee that the requests will be processed. Applicants to Fellowships for Abroad must fill in the requested fields;
- **the Department:** select the applicant's department from the drop-down menu (unless the form indicates "not available"); if it is not listed in the menu or some information is not up-to-date, please follow the instructions provided here: <https://www.direzionescientifica.airc.it/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Registration-Hosting-Institution.pdf>;
- **the Laboratory:** if applicable (optional);
- **the Grant Officer** (optional): applicants to Fellowships for Italy only may designate a Grant Officer from the Hosting Institution to assist in the preparation and submission of the application. The name of the Grant Officer, if not already present in the form and selectable from the drop-down menu, must be communicated to AIRC as described here: <https://www.direzionescientifica.airc.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Registration-grant-officer.pdf>. AIRC will create an account for the Grant Officer and send him/her the access codes to it. The name of the Grant Officer will then appear in the drop-down menu of the application form, allowing the candidate to select his/her name. From their Personal Area, the authorized Grant Officers will have access to the applicant's application form and will have the possibility of completing and submitting it on behalf of the applicant.

4. Legal Representative

The Legal Representative ("Legale rappresentante") of the Hosting Institution will be responsible, along with the head of the hosting lab, of all the legal and administrative duties of the fellowship award and will have to **sign the application**.

Fellowships for Italy:

Please select the name the Legal Representative from the drop-down menu. The information regarding the Legal Representative is provided automatically by PAGES, based on data previously filled in by other applicants from the same Hosting Institution.

In case the Director of a Department within the Hosting Institution is duly authorized to sign as Legal Representative, check the box "By flagging this check box you are declaring that the Director of the Department is duly authorized to sign on behalf of the Legal Representative of the Institution". Please note that, **by flagging this box, the PI certifies that the Director of the Department has power of attorney**. The name of the Director of the Department will be displayed in the form.

Only the person selected through this procedure can sign the application, therefore, please make sure that all data are correct and up-to-date, and then click on "Save". If they are not, please **promptly** notify AIRC and follow the instructions provided here: <https://www.direzionescientifica.airc.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Legal-representative-data.pdf>.

Fellowships for Abroad:

Please fill out the requested fields with the contact data of the Legal Representative of the Hosting Institution. Please make sure that all data are correct and up-to-date.

5. Letter of acceptance by the Hosting Institution

It is mandatory to use the template available in this form: please download it and fill in the requested fields. Do not modify or delete any of the template's sections. Once completed, the letter must be printed out on letterhead paper and **signed by the head of the hosting lab (max 2 pages)**, then uploaded in the form. **It is possible to use a holographic or a digital signature.** Please note that digital signatures will no longer be visible in the final PDF of the entire application; however, the AIRC staff can check for the presence of such digital signature in the uploaded document.

In the letter, the head of the hosting lab **MUST** address the following points:

- **Hosting Institution:** describe what the Hosting Institution will offer as research environment to the fellow (in terms of facilities, infrastructure, activities, opportunities for interactions with international scientists, research environment);
- **Lab space and research group composition:** describe what the hosting lab will offer to the fellow. Please use this section to indicate whether the applicant is already working at the hosting lab at the Call's deadline and, in such a case, since when;
- **Resources and collaborations:** Please describe the type of support (*e.g.* research grants held by the supervisor) will be available for the entire duration of the fellowship to carry out the proposed research activities. Additionally, list any relevant collaborations (both academic and industrial) that will be crucial for the feasibility of the proposed research plan;
- **Mentoring activities and complementary skills training:** please describe the mentoring activities that the supervisor will organize specifically for the fellow (*e.g.* frequency of one-on-one meetings, presentations at lab meetings, participation to seminars and international congresses etc.). Please include the training in complementary skills the fellow will have access to (*e.g.* grants and papers writing, ethical issues, research integrity, intellectual property rights, etc.);
- **Freedom to publish:** declare that the applicant will be free to publish as first author, where appropriate, the results of the research carried out during the fellowship appointment;
- **Fellowship gross amount and Insurance (only for Fellowships for Abroad):** please indicate the requested yearly fellowship gross amount (including both employee's and employer's taxes) **in local currency**. The amount requested must correspond to the gross salary of a fellow at the same career level, working in the Hosting Institution. Please indicate also how the health insurance' costs will be covered. **Failing to provide information about the fellowship amount may cause the**

application to be excluded from peer review.

Please note that this document is particularly important, as it represents the major source of information for reviewers on the mentoring and training opportunities that the fellow will receive. As such, it will impact on the assessment of the “Quality of the Hosting Institution”, one of the major review criteria.

6. Personal Statement

Please write a brief statement in the following sections (max 250 words each):

- **Motivation and interest in a career in cancer:** applicants are invited to explain how their education and early experiences in a research lab have shaped their motivation and interest in pursuing a career in cancer research.
- **Expected impact of the fellowship on the applicant's career:** applicants are invited to describe how they will benefit from working in the selected hosting lab and why it represents the most suitable place for their personal and professional development. Applicants who have already worked in the hosting lab must indicate how an AIRC fellowship to do research in the same lab would impact on their career development (skills, opportunities, etc.).

7. Project keywords

Project keywords will be one of the tools used by the AIRC Peer Review Office to assign each application to the most appropriate reviewers. Therefore, **a good choice of keywords is extremely important to ensure that reviewers with the most adequate expertise will evaluate the application.** Pick a set of keywords that clearly define the key aspects of the research plan. The list of keywords is available at https://www.direzionescientifica.airc.it/wp-content/uploads/Keywords_2026.pdf

8. Abstract and Proposal main body

Abstract structured into: Background, Hypothesis, Aims, Experimental Design, Expected Results and Impact on Cancer. The total number of words must not exceed 500. Abstract must contain only **publishable information**, as, in case of funding, it will be made available on the funder website and other public databases collecting data on national and international funding in cancer research, such as ICRP (International Cancer Research Partnership).

Proposal main body: a single PDF file of **max 6 pages** (including figures and tables) must be uploaded. The text, agreed upon with the head of the hosting lab, must be organized in the following sections.

- Background (suggested length: 1 page);
- Research plan (suggested length: 3 pages). The research project must have a strong relevance to cancer and the applicant's role in the project should be clearly highlighted.
- Feasibility (suggested length: 1 page). This section can be used to provide: preliminary data, if not already included in the Research plan; statistical power calculation, if applicable; description of key

facilities or resources instrumental for the success of the research plan; caveats and pitfalls;

- References (suggested length: 1 page).

Please make sure to propose a research plan that is **consistent with the work of one person and with the expected duration of the fellowship**. Proposals that look like a 5-year grant requiring the work of several people will be considered unfeasible and will be rated very low.

Resubmissions of previously rejected proposals are admitted, as long as the applicant meets all eligibility requirements. A point-by-point reply to the criticisms and issues raised by the reviewers is not mandatory, but indications on how the application has been modified to address the issues can be included.

If deemed necessary, applicants for a Fellowship for Italy, can include a short training visit (max 3 months) in a laboratory abroad during their fellowship appointment. The benefits of this short visit both for the feasibility of the project and for the fellows' training should be highlighted in the research plan. The fellowship amount will not be modified during the short training visit and no additional funding will be provided.

9. GANTT chart

In this section, please upload a GANTT chart to provide a clear visual representation of the project timeline, making it easier to understand the foreseen tasks, their durations and dependencies. The GANTT chart must be uploaded as a 1-page PDF file.

10. Declaration on originality of the application

The proposal must be **original**. Scientific overlap with other AIRC applications must be disclosed and justified. Submissions of proposals previously presented to AIRC by another PI will not be accepted.

We are aware that copying may be accidental and that parts of an application (e.g. materials and methods) may include duplicate material, originally produced by the PI for other goals than the present application.

In this form, answer YES to disclose any possible homology or scientific overlap with other applications and provide the justification (including the original AIRC application information) in the dedicated box. This also applies to:

- Applications by any other researcher (including also the supervisor or collaborators);
- Applications submitted within different AIRC funding schemes;
- Applications submitted in past years, regardless of whether they have been funded or not.

Please note that AIRC checks documents with anti-plagiarism software. **Proposals that contain blatantly and substantially copied materials already included in an AIRC application submitted by another researcher will be rejected.**

11. AIRC Policy on Research Integrity

The Hosting Institutions must promote the highest standards of integrity in research, in compliance with the relevant [AIRC policy](#). AIRC is not responsible, and does not accept any liability, for scientific misconduct of

personnel involved in an AIRC-funded research project or fellowship. Please read the policy and check the corresponding box.

12. Education of the applicant

In this section, please list the degrees held by the applicant or the programs he/she is enrolled in. Each applicant can add only one Master's degree, one PhD degree and one Specialty.

The form automatically shows the information stored in the "My Profile" section of the applicant's AIRC account. A record can be modified or updated anytime by clicking on the "Degree" column and filling in the pop-up window.

13. Certificate of Master's degree (Pre-Doc only)

Please upload a copy, in PDF format, of the official document certifying the master's degree attained by the applicant and the corresponding transcripts (*i.e.*, scores obtained in individual exams). The document is needed to establish the eligibility to the Call and it should **include the date the degree was obtained** ("laurea magistrale", "laurea magistrale a ciclo unico", or equivalent non Italian degree). Please include a page with a description of the certificate provided and of the score range (and an English translation, if available). This is meant to facilitate the work of reviewers who may not be familiar with the academic transcripts of the applicant, especially if reported in a different language than English. For instance, for Italian applicants uploading a certificate of "laurea magistrale", please clarify that the scores of individual exams range from 18 to 30, 30 being the best score, and that the range for the final score or "voto di laurea" is from 80 to 110, 110 being the best score. As an alternative to the above-mentioned documents, the **official Diploma Supplement** can be uploaded.

14. Certificate of PhD or Specialty (Post-Doc only)

In this mandatory form, please upload a copy, in PDF format, of the official document certifying the attainment of the PhD or Specialty degree. If the applicant holds both degrees, please merge the certificates in a single PDF file. In case the certificate is in a different language than English, please include an English translation, if available. **The date of PhD or Specialty defence/viva will be used as reference for the eligibility. Please consider that in order to be eligible for the Post-Doc fellowships, the expected graduation date must be no later than April 2027. If the applicant expects to obtain the degree by the end of April 2027, please upload a document, in PDF format, certifying his/her enrolment in the last year of the program.**

15. Applicant's research and professional experience

In order to complete this form, you need to update the "Research and professional experience" section in "My Profile".

List all research and professional positions held by the applicant. (*e.g.* undergraduate and postgraduate research experiences, post-docs, activities after completing the residency) **without leaving any period**

unaccounted for. By clicking on “Add new record”, the form automatically shows the information inserted in the “My Profile” section of the applicant’s AIRC account. By selecting some or all of these records, they will be uploaded in the current application; please check that all information is included and properly uploaded. A record can be modified or updated anytime by clicking on the “Position” column and filling in the pop-up window. Please note that previously awarded AIRC fellowships, if any, will be automatically listed in a separate table which will be added to the application.

16. Research interruptions and justifications

Applicants are invited to insert research interruptions in the last 10 years (from 2016 to 2026) and to describe in detail whether such career breaks have had a significant impact on their track record. Reviewers are instructed to take this information into account when assessing the scientific productivity of an applicant.

Research interruptions include:

- **Maternity leave** (female applicants): select “Add maternity leave”, insert the date of birth in the “From” date field and select the number of children born on that date. A career break of 12 months will be automatically calculated for each child (e.g., for twins, the system automatically calculates 2 years of interruption).
- **Illness, personal issues or parental leave** (the latter for male applicants): indicate the period of interruption (at least 5 months) and describe it in the dedicated box.

The system will automatically sum up all career breaks and will indicate the total months of interruptions.

Effects of research interruptions on applicant’s eligibility window

For each child, female applicants have a 12-month extension in the eligibility window.

For all other interruptions of at least 5 consecutive months (illness, paternal leave or other issues) the eligibility window will be extended by the interruption’s exact duration.

Examples:

1. Applicants to Pre-Doc fellowships who graduated before December 31, 2020 are eligible only if they had a career break of at least 5 consecutive months in the past 10 years, or a maternity leave: e.g. a candidate who graduated in June 2020 and who had a 6-month research interruption can apply; a candidate who graduated in February 2020 and who had a 6-month break is not eligible; a candidate who graduated in February 2020 and who had a maternity leave is eligible.
2. Applicants to Post-Doc fellowships who obtained the PhD or the Speciality degree before December, 31 2020 are eligible only if they had a career break of at least 5 consecutive months in the past 10 years, a maternity leave. E.g., a candidate who graduated in June 2020 and had a 6-month research interruption can apply; a candidate who graduated in February 2020 and had a 6-month break is not eligible; a candidate who graduated in February 2020 and had a maternity leave is eligible.

Effects of research interruptions on publications time range

The system will automatically sum up all career breaks and will indicate the total months of interruptions. For each full year of interruption, the system will automatically add one extra year to the publications time range.

Examples:

Applicant with no research interruptions: publications spanning from January 2021 to 2026 (up until the submission deadline).

Applicant with n months of research interruptions, with n comprised between ≥ 12 and < 24 : publications spanning from January 2020 to 2026 (up until the submission deadline).

Applicant with n months of research interruptions, with n comprised between ≥ 24 and < 36 : publications spanning from January 2019 to 2026 (up until the submission deadline).

17. Publications of the applicant

If the applicant had research interruptions in the last 10 years, please fill in the “Research Interruptions and Justifications” form first, because the career breaks will have an impact on the publications time range. See the dedicated form for details.

In order to complete this form you need to update the “Publications” section in “My Profile”.

Provide the full list of all the papers published in the last 5 years (*i.e.* 2021-2025, or more, depending on whether you have had career breaks longer than 12 months). Do not include abstracts, conference papers, letters to the editor, book chapters and papers published in non peer-reviewed journals.

From the application form:

- You can add new publications by selecting **“Add from My Profile – Publications”** button.
- To include manuscripts that have been accepted for publication but not yet published, please click on **“Add papers in press”**.
- To verify or update authorship information and to add AIRC acknowledgements, click on the publication title.

The applicant is responsible for uploading the most accurate information regarding publications and authorship. The IF assigned to each article, regardless of the publication date, is the latest provided by the Journal of Citation Reports (JCR) by Clarivate Analytics. For these Calls, the 2025 JCR list, with the 2024 2-year IF will be used.

Candidates are required to check all the information and to contact the AIRC Peer Review Office (fellowships.applicationsupport@airc.it) before the deadline of the Call in order to correct any possible inaccuracy or mistake.

Papers accepted after the full submission deadline

In case additional papers **with the PI as leading author** (first, last or corresponding author) are accepted for publication after the full submission deadline, the PI can add this supplementary information to the application. From the “submission section” of the personal area, PI can click on “add additional paper in

press”, insert the requested information and upload **a single PDF file** containing a copy of the acceptance letter and a copy of the title page. AIRC Peer Review Office will accept/decline the requests.

All communications received in this regard by AIRC **by July 22, 2026** (23:59 Central European Summer Time) will be forwarded to all reviewers evaluating the proposal. Any communication received after July 22, 2026 (23:59 Central European Summer Time) will not be taken into consideration.

18. Patents

In order to complete this form you need to update the “Patents” section in “My Profile”.

In this non-mandatory form, please list patents granted to the applicant in the last 10 years. By clicking on “Add new record”, the form automatically shows the information stored in the “My Profile” section of your AIRC account. By selecting some or all of these records, they will be uploaded in the current application.

19. Courses, workshops and additional training

In order to complete this form, you need to update the “Additional courses” section in “My Profile”.

In this non mandatory form, list up to 5 training events attended or ongoing (courses, workshops, etc.). By clicking on “Add new record” the form automatically shows the information inserted in the “My Profile” section of the applicant’s AIRC account. Please select the records to be uploaded in the current application by checking on the corresponding box.

20. Participation of the applicant to scientific conferences

In order to complete this form, you need to update the “Scientific conferences” section in “My Profile”.

In this non-mandatory form, list up to 5 conferences attended by the applicant by the application deadline, with an active contribution (poster, oral presentation or invited speaker). By clicking on “Add new record” the form automatically shows the information stored in the “My Profile” section of your AIRC account. Please select the records to be uploaded in the current application by checking on the corresponding box.

21. Awards of the applicant

In order to complete this form, you need to update the “Awards” section in “My Profile”.

In this non-mandatory form, list up to 5 awards the applicant has been honoured with. By clicking on “Add new record” the form automatically shows the information stored in the “My Profile” section of your AIRC account. Please select the records to be uploaded in the current application by checking on the corresponding box.

22. Head of the current lab

Please fill in all fields with the requested data on the applicant’s head of the current lab (i.e. the lab where the applicant is working at the submission deadline).

23. Letter of presentation

Please attach a letter of presentation by a scientist who mentored the applicant during his/her scientific career (e.g. head of the current lab, PhD supervisor). The name of the scientist should be listed in the section “Education of the applicant” or “Applicant’s research and professional experience”. The letter (**max 2 pages**) should be in letterhead paper, dated and signed, and must be uploaded as PDF file. **It is possible to use a holographic or a digital signature.** Please note that digital signatures will no longer be visible in the final PDF of the entire application; however, the AIRC staff can check the uploaded document for the presence of such digital signatures.

In case the person who writes the letter wants to maintain confidentiality, the applicant must select the option “The letter of presentation will be sent by the deadline indicated in the Call”. The letter should be sent by e-mail to AIRC (fellowships.applicationsupport@airc.it) by the deadline of this Call, with the e-mail subject line “Fellowship 2026 – Presentation letter_Surname of the applicant”. A pending action “Waiting for reference letter” will remain visible in the personal area of the applicant until AIRC receives such letter. The AIRC Peer Review Office will then forward the letter to the reviewers assigned to the application.

If the letter of presentation is not included in the application, or if AIRC does not receive it by the deadline of this Call, the application will not be sent out for review.

24. Collaboration letters

If relevant, please include formal letters of collaboration in the application. Collaborators are scientists external to the hosting lab, who are necessary to the development of the fellow’s research project, e.g. for studies with animals, use of specific cell lines, reagents or human samples, clinical activity, etc. They may include scientists working in the same Hosting Institution, belonging to other research groups, or scientists affiliated with other institutions.

The collaboration letter(s) must be attached as a single PDF file (max 1 page for each letter, **5 pages in total**). Each letter (in letterhead paper, dated and signed) must clearly indicate the name of the fellow, the name and the Hosting Institution of the collaborator, the role of the collaborator in the project and the expertise and/or reagents that he/she will provide.

25. Education and training of the head of the hosting lab

Click on “Add new record” and list degrees and post-doctoral trainings of the head of the hosting lab (only the most relevant).

26. Research and professional experience of the head of the hosting lab

Click on “Add new record” and list the most relevant positions held by the head of the hosting lab.

27. Experience of the head of the hosting lab as a research supervisor

Describe how many people (undergraduate and PhD students, post-doctoral fellows, etc.) the head of the

hosting lab has supervised in his/her career, indicating how many of the former trainees have become independent scientists.

28. Publications of the head of the hosting lab

A list of **maximum 10 selected** publications of the head of the hosting lab spanning January 2021 to 2026, must be included. Click on “Add PubMed publications” or “Add Web of Science publications” and follow the prompt. It is not possible to include papers in press in this section.

29. Financial support (only for Fellowships for Abroad)

Please enter the amount requested (in Euros) in the “Fellowship gross amount/year” and the “Travel expenses/year” boxes. The Fellowship gross amount requested **MUST include employee’s taxes, employer’s taxes and contributions to social security** if applicable. The requested amount cannot exceed the standard salary of a fellow at the same career level working in the same Institution and **MUST** correspond exactly to the amount indicated in the letter of acceptance by the Hosting Institution. Please note that no modifications to the amount requested will be allowed after the application submission or after the fellowship is awarded. The Travel expenses should represent the expected cost for **one** roundtrip ticket per year to the city where the Hosting Institution is located. Travel must be in economy class and at the lowest fare possible.

In the “Costs justification” section explain how the fellowship gross amount has been determined, specifying:

- net salary;
- gross salary (gross salary in local currency of a fellow at the same career level working in the same Institution);
- employer’s taxes and contributions to social security;
- other sources of financial support that the applicant may receive, if applicable.

Costs for Health Insurance will not be covered by AIRC if the Hosting Institution is located in a Country of the European Union, the European Economic Area, or other countries with which Italy has agreements in place for sanitary expenses, like Switzerland, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, Principality of Monaco, Republic of San Marino, Serbia, Tunisia.

In all other cases, please enter the estimate or quotation of these costs in the “Health insurance/year” box. Use the “Costs justification” section to detail if the Health Insurance will be paid by the applicant directly.

Should these costs be covered by the Hosting Institution and included in the fellowship gross amount (benefits), enter “0”. In any case, use the “Costs justification” section to detail the situation and any amount requested for this category of expenses.

30. Bio-Ethical Requirements

The following terms and conditions apply to research with humans and research with animals:

- No research with humans or animals will be undertaken in the absence of the necessary authorizations; grant money cannot be used to cover costs associated with and the fellow cannot be involved in studies with humans or animals if the competent authorities have not authorized such studies.
- AIRC reserves the right to check the compliance with the bio-ethical requirements. To this aim, a copy of the authorizations must be made available to AIRC upon request at any time throughout the duration of the project and up to 10 years after the project is concluded.
- In case the competent authorities do not approve the proposed human or animal studies, the applicant must promptly notify AIRC and devise an alternative research plan, which will be subject to scientific evaluation, to make sure that the project is still scientifically sound and competitive.
- Should there be substantial modifications in the humans or animal experimentation, which were not foreseen in the research plan of this application, the applicant must detail such novelties in the fellowship renewal requests.
- Any proposed modifications of the research plan will be subject to scientific evaluation, to make sure that the project is still scientifically sound and competitive. Project continuation and renewals of the fellowship will be contingent on a positive evaluation of the proposed modifications.
- AIRC is not responsible and does not accept any liability for studies regarding research with humans and research with animals.

By signing the application, the applicant and the Legal Representative of the Hosting Institution certify that they will comply with AIRC terms and conditions regarding research with humans and research with animals.

Please check the box “I have read and agree with the bio-ethical requirements mandated by AIRC”, then click on “Save”.

Further indications for each type of research are described below.

Research with humans

Check “YES” if the research plan involves any of the following:

- human biological samples (with the exclusion of commercially available human cell lines);
- human genetic material and/or human data collection (e.g. genetic information, health etc.);
- clinical studies with healthy volunteers and/or patients.

For AIRC-funded research projects that include independent phase I – II clinical trials:

- AIRC cannot be considered the promoter/sponsor of the trial;
- AIRC does not accept any liability for harm to participants in the clinical studies.

If you check “YES”, **the authorization of the local Ethics Committee or Institutional Review Board (IRB) is mandatory** and must be valid for the entire duration of the human studies as detailed in the research proposal. **The authorization must not be included in the application.** In case of funding, AIRC reserves the right to request a copy at any time throughout the duration of the project and up to 10 years after the project is concluded.

The approval document issued by the Ethics Committee MUST indicate:

- the date when the IRB meeting was held; approvals obtained more than 3 years ago, *i.e.* prior to 2023, are NOT acceptable, unless the study protocol is still active (supporting documentation might be requested to verify this is the case);
- the name of the applicant or of the head of the hosting lab. In case biospecimens are provided by external sources/collaborators, the authorization must be issued by the Ethics Committee of the collaborator’s research center;
- a clear reference to the studies described in the proposal (*e.g.* the title of the application).

Research with animals

Check “YES” if your research plan involves studies with vertebrates, cephalopods and foetal forms of mammals.

If you check “YES”, the regulatory approval of the competent institutional or national authority in the country in which the research is to be carried out must be obtained and must be valid for the entire duration of the animal studies as detailed in the research proposal. For **fellowship for Italy** the authorization from the Italian Ministry of Health is mandatory according to the D.Lgs 26/2014. The experiments must be performed following the guidelines described in: Jann Hau, Steven J.Schapiro: “Handbook of Laboratory Animal Science - Essential Principles and Practices, 4th Edition” (CRC Press, Taylor and Francis group, 2021).

The authorization must not be included in the application. In case of funding, AIRC reserves the right to request a copy at any time throughout the duration of the project and up to 10 years after the project is concluded.

Research supported by AIRC that involves animal experimentation must comply with the **principles of the Three Rs (3Rs) to Replace, Reduce and Refine the use of animals in research**, as required by national and international rules. Please upload a PDF document (**max 3 pages**) describing how the 3Rs have been implemented in the research plan (*e.g.* explain why the anticipated results and benefits of the proposed research justify the use of animals, and why methods avoiding the use of living animals cannot be used; provide details and justification on the number of animals proposed for the research plan; describe all actions that will be taken to avoid or minimize pain and distress; etc.). The content of this form will not be included in the PDF of the application: it will generate a separate PDF that will be available in your personal area and that will be made available to reviewers upon request.

31. FEA Acceptance (“Firma Elettronica Avanzata”)

This form applies only to candidates who hold an Italian tax code (“codice fiscale”). Applicant must sign the submitted application with the digital signature tool provided by AIRC: refer to the [FEA instructions](#) for details. If the applicant does not hold an Italian tax code (“codice fiscale”), please contact our offices at administrative.office@airc.it.

Proposal Submission

Online submission

Applicants are advised not to leave submission to the very last minute, as heavy server load might affect system performance.

Please follow these steps:

- Access the “Check your forms” section anytime in order to:
 - a) check and see whether each form has been correctly filled out. A yellow warning sign will indicate whether there are missing data or inconsistencies that will not prevent the application from being submitted. For mandatory forms that are incomplete, the system will indicate the information that must be provided in order to submit the application;
 - b) view and print the application in its incomplete/complete state. By clicking on “Create draft” and then on “Open submission draft” you can download the PDF draft generated by the system;
- The “Submit” section becomes available only when all mandatory forms are complete and have the green flag. The submit section automatically creates the complete PDF draft: carefully read the PDF draft and verify that the entire content is correct and readable (e.g. make sure data the personal data of the PI and the information regarding the Hosting Institution is up to date; make sure that PDF documents that have been uploaded are in the correct orientation and are not truncated; that figures and Gantt included have a high enough resolution; that all publications in the time range indicated have been added, with the inclusion – if necessary – of the correct supporting documentation, etc.).
- After having ascertained that all data are correctly reported in the proposal’s PDF draft, please check the box “I have checked the PDF files included in the application, and I confirm they are correct”. Only after this step it is possible to click on “Submit”.

Be aware that after clicking on “Submit” it will not be possible to make any further modifications.

Applicants will receive a confirmation of the submission by e-mail.

The following documents will be generated and stored in the “Your submissions archive” section of the Personal Area:

- **PDF file of the application:** this is the document that will be sent to the reviewers.
- **Publications addenda:** it contains the list of publications (also present in the PDF file of the

application) and supporting documentation for papers in press, Web of Science Core Collection publications and authorship certifications;

- **Research on animals – 3Rs**

A copy of the above documents should be saved for future references.

The application cannot be modified after the online submission deadline. The evaluation of the proposal is ONLY based on the information contained in the application.

Submission of digitally signed application

Both the applicant and the Legal Representative must digitally sign the submitted application: please refer to the FEA instructions for details.

Applicants: if the applicants hold an Italian tax code (“codice fiscale”), they must sign the application with the digital signature tool provided by AIRC: refer to the [FEA instructions](#) for details. If the applicants do not hold an Italian tax code, please contact our offices.

Legal Representatives: legal representatives of a Hosting Institution in Italy must use a certified digital signature. Legal representatives of a Hosting Institution outside of Italy can use a digital signature of their choice.

The submitted proposal with the two signatures must be uploaded by the deadline indicated in the Calls.