

UNIVERSITÉ
LIBRE
DE BRUXELLES



VRIJE
UNIVERSITEIT
BRUSSEL

Interdisciplinary Research In Societal challenges (IRIS COFUND)

ULB-VUB MSCA POSTDOCTORAL COFUND



IRIS
ULB — VUB



Co-funded by
the European Union

This project has received funding from the European Union's HE research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101217407

Agenda

Introduction to IRIS COFUND

- **Call 1: OPEN**
 - Eligibility: Who can apply
 - Remuneration
 - Societal challenges
- **Application, evaluation and selection process**
 - Required documents
 - The proposal
- **ULB, VUB and R&I ecosystem**
 - Finding a supervisor and co-supervisor
- **Training programme**

Useful documents and links

Q&A session with participants

Questions? Send them to us:



Go to slido.com and type
code: **9994384**

Recording will be available afterwards!
Questions on Slido!



The IRIS Postdoctoral COFUND

The COFUND action provides funding for regional, national and international programmes for training and career development, through co-funding mechanisms. It spreads the MSCA's best practices by promoting high standards and excellent working conditions. COFUND promotes sustainable training and international, interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral mobility. **This program supports Higher Education Institutions to attract and recruit talent.**

The IRIS project: Interdisciplinary and regional priorities

- ULB/VUB are both based in Brussels
- Common research structures
- Themes: 6 societal challenges for the BCR from the Regional Innovation Plan 2021-2027*



Call 1: OPEN

- Deadline: **31st October 2025 17h00 CET**
- 18 fellows recruited: 12@ULB, 6@VUB
- 30-month postdoctoral fellowships
- **Bottom-up projects** from all disciplines. Open to all research groups.
- **2 supervisors from different disciplines**
- Secondments and research visits are optional but encouraged

Apply: [Call Information – IRIS-COFUND.EU](https://iris-cofund.eu)



Eligibility: who can apply

- Applicants of any age and any nationality are eligible to apply.
- In possession of a doctoral degree or have successfully defended the doctoral thesis by the deadline of the call.
- Applicants **must not have** resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in Belgium for more than **12 months during the last 3 years** before the call deadline.
- Holders of a PhD degree with **maximum 8 years of full-time research experience** since obtaining the PhD (applicants can calculate research experience deducting periods of: maternity/parental leave, compulsory national military service, long term sick or family care leave, and procedures for obtaining refugee status)



Remuneration

Budget categories			Amount (€/month)
Fellow-related	➔	Living allowance* (gross)	5000
		Mobility allowance (net)	450
		Family allowance (net, if eligible)	400
Research-related (managed by the home research group) Research, training and networking			333

The *living allowance is an **indicative value**. This value represents the total employment costs, including the fellow's gross salary as well as the **employer's and employee social security contributions**.



Societal challenges

Potential candidates can apply under **one or more themes** from the 6 societal challenges identified in the BCR Regional Innovation Plan 2021-2027

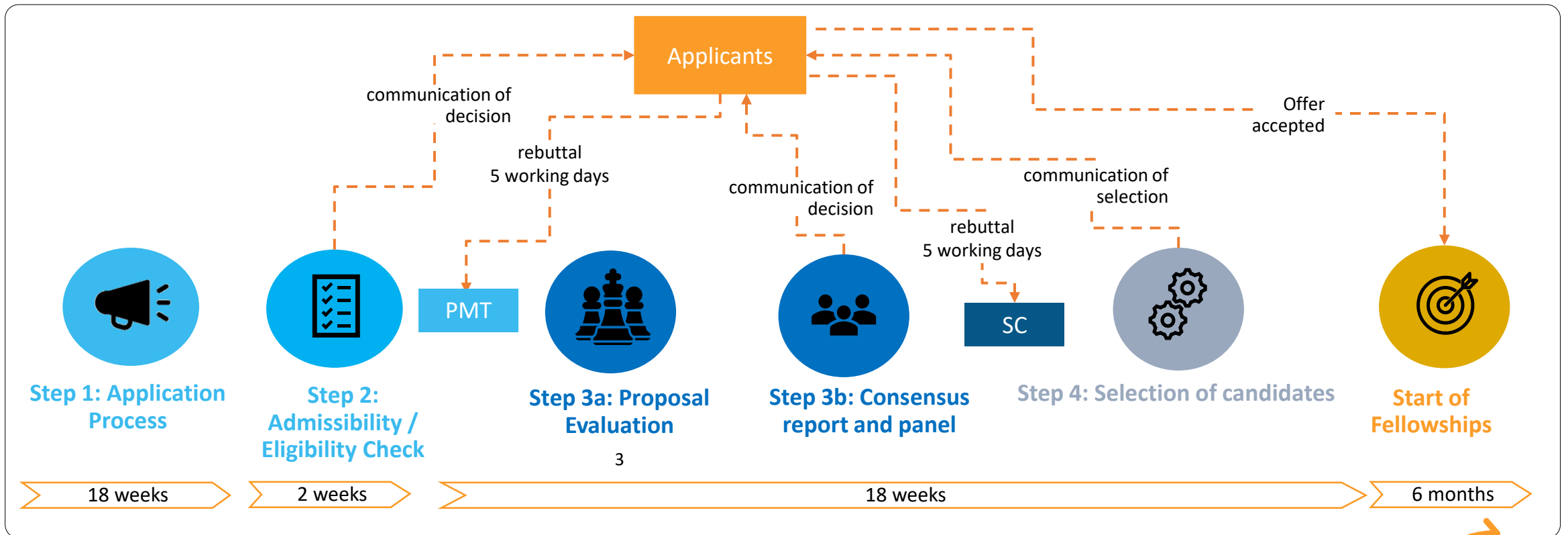
Projects are **bottom-up and interdisciplinary!**

- Climate & Energy
- Resource optimization
- Mobility
- Healthy and sustainable food
- Health and well-being
- Participatory and inclusive society

[The Regional Innovation Plan | Innoviris](#)



Application, evaluation and selection process



The Application: Required documents

1. [Research proposal template](#)
2. [Narrative CV template](#) (REGISTER! [webinar 23rd July 15h30 CET](#))
3. [Ethics self-assessment template](#)
4. [Letter of recommendation](#)
5. [Mobility Calculator](#)



The proposal

- Use the mandatory [template](#)
- First page (does not count towards 10-page limit)
Includes applicant details and abstract
- 10 pages for proposal: 3 major sections
 1. Excellence
 2. Impact
 3. Implementation
- Follow formatting requirements and maintain the headings
- Instructions in [blue](#) to be deleted
- PDFs longer than **11 pages** cannot be uploaded



The proposal

Part 1: EXCELLENCE

1.1 Scientific quality of the research project

1.1.1 State-of-the-art

1.1.2 Research questions → link to societal challenges!

1.2 Methodology

1.3 Gender and diversity aspects

1.4 Open science practices

1.5 Qualification and training needs of the researcher/Training programme



The proposal

Part 2: IMPACT

- 2.1 Expected impact of the project on the researcher's career
- 2.2 Expected impact for society
- 2.3 Expected impact on the state-of-the-art of research
- 2.4 Dissemination, communication and exploitation activities

Part 3: IMPLEMENTATION

- 3.1 Work plan
- 3.2 GANTT chart
- 3.2 Risk management

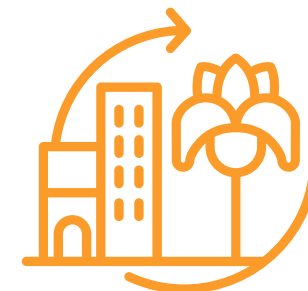


Hypothetical example

- Interdisciplinarity of supervisors based on [level 1 MSCA keywords](#)
- Home university must be ULB or VUB, co-supervisor can be selected from any other institution

Project under climate and energy theme

Societal challenge	Climate and energy	
→ MSCA Level 1 keywords	V2 Earth system science C4 biochemistry	
Research question	How do urban environmental factors, such as air pollution and soil contamination, influence the physiological and biochemical responses of trees and plant life, and how can interdisciplinary approaches integrating chemistry and environmental sciences contribute to developing strategies for enhancing urban vegetation resilience and ecosystem services?	
→ Home university and supervisor	ULB supervisor and relevant research group	Or a VUB supervisor
→ Inter-disciplinary co-supervisor	ULB or VUB supervisor from a complementary discipline	Or any other institution from Brussels



ULB and VUB

For ULB researchers consult:

- the [ULB Research Inventory](#)
- Search for Université libre de Bruxelles in the [CIVIS MSCA Supervisors data base](#)

For VUB researchers consult

- the [VUB Research Portal](#),
- the [VUB MSCA-Postdoctoral Fellowship Repositor](#)

Joint centers ULB/VUB

[FARI: AI for Common Good](#)

[Brussels Center for Urban Studies](#)

[Open.lab Brussels](#)

[Brussels Institute for Advance Studies](#)



ULB

- **3700** students
- **4160** researchers in 2024
- More than **2000 Ph.D candidates**
- Almost **50% women researchers**
- More 30% of researchers are **international**
- **200 research units and 10 interdisciplinary instituts**
- **244M** of annual budget in 2024

Research Infrastructure

- Analytical Platform of the Faculty of Pharmacy – APFP
- BRIGHTCore, Brussels Interuniversity Genomics High Throughput Core
- Center for Instrumentation in Magnetic Resonance – CIREM
- Center for Microscopy and Molecular Imaging – CMMI
- Research Center for Cognition and Neurosciences – CRCN
- Flow Cytometry – Biopark Charleroi Brussels South/Erasme
- LiMiF – Light Microscopy Facility
- Micro-milli – Micrometric and Millimetric Systems
- PANORAMA – Platform for Object Scanning and Surveying in Architecture, Monuments, and Archaeology
- Functional Neuroimaging Platform
- Transgenesis Platform
- Policy Lab



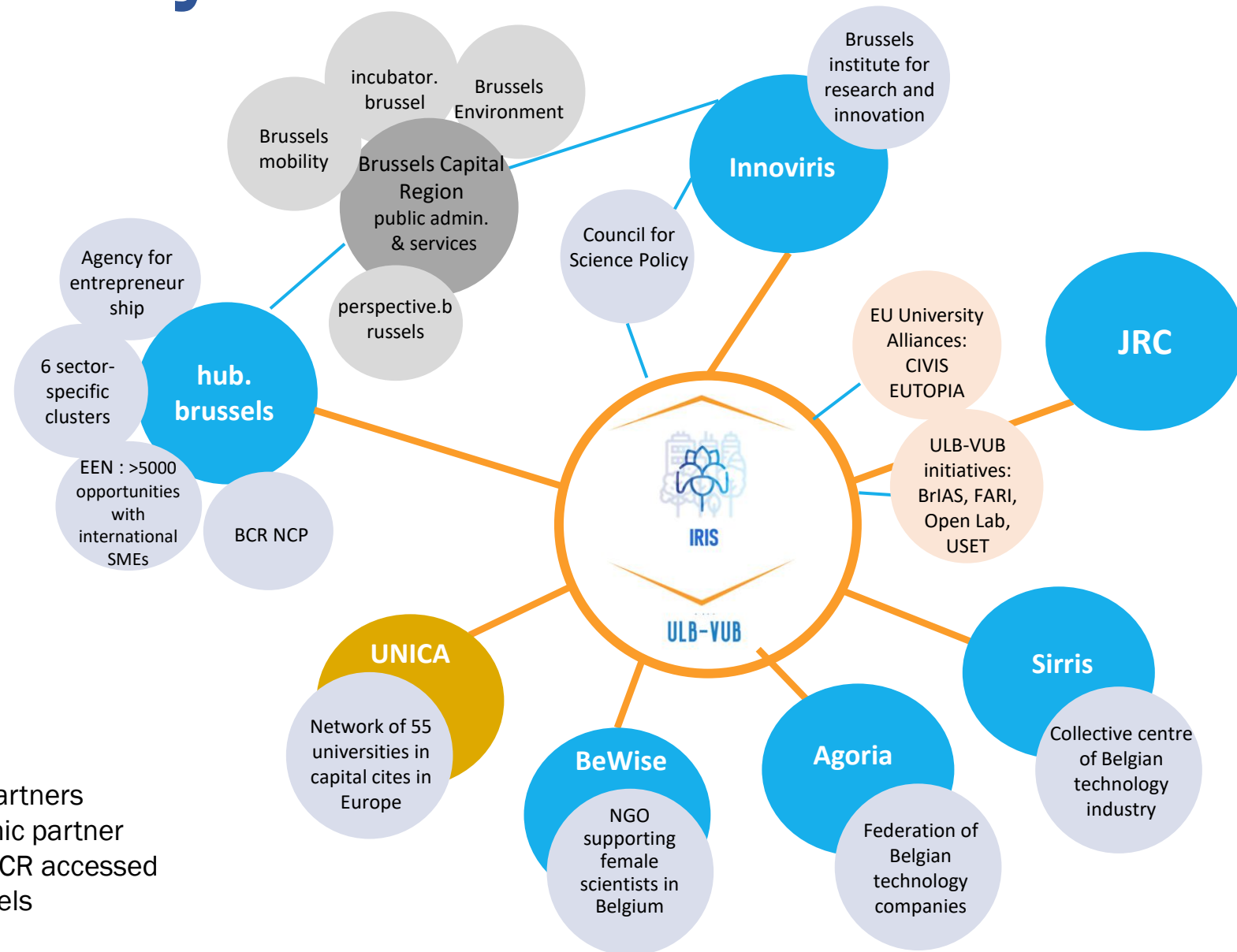
- Over **21 000 students** hailing from **145 nationalities**.
- Here, **diversity** isn't just a buzzword - it's our **strength**.
- **2 269 Doctoral Students** in 2023-2024, of which **55% international**.
- **Comprehensive** university with **96** research groups in **8** faculties.
- **2504 publications** in 2024.
- **47** active spin-offs and **223** active patent families in 2024.
- Total **research budget** of **156,5M** in 2024.

Research infrastructure

- Brubotics Rehabilitation Research Center
- In Vivo Cellular and Molecular Imaging
- FlowCore
- Materials Characterisation
- Microlab Cleanroom
- BRIGHTcore
- Support for Quantitative and Qualitative Research
- Animalarium
- Visual and Spatial Tissue Analysis
- The Social Survey
- Brussels Digital Text Lab
- Human and Artificial minds and bodies



IRIS R&I ecosystem



Legend

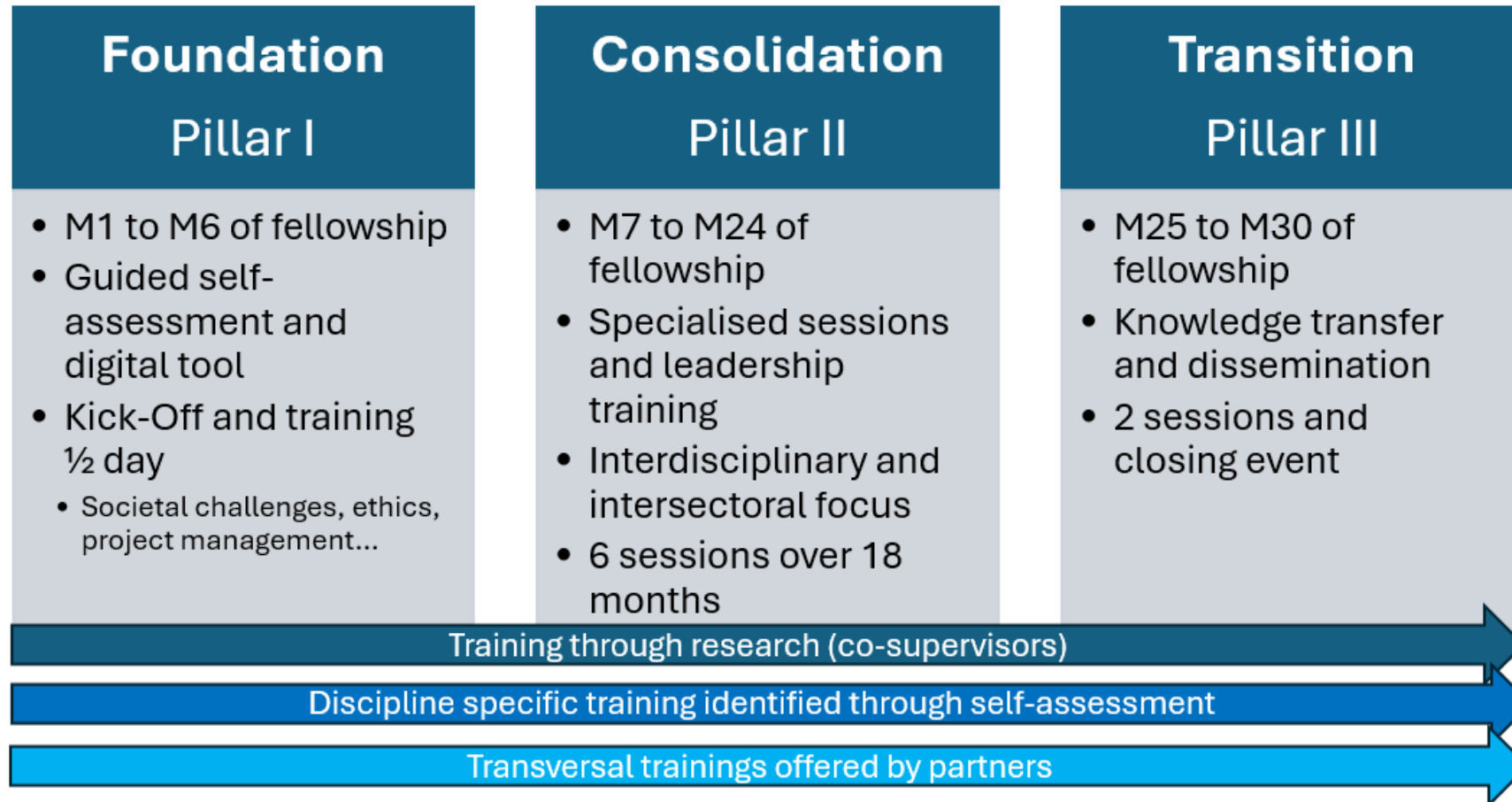
Blue: Associated intersectoral partners

Orange: Main European academic partner

Grey: examples of agencies of BCR accessed through Innoviris and hub.brussels



Training program: 3 pillars



Questions? Slido.com code:9994384



	Main Training Events & Conferences (lead)	Training Pillar	Month of Fellowship
1	Fellowship kick off and training (one day) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Societal challenges in the BCR (Innoviris) ■ Research ethics and integrity (ULB) ■ Project management basics (VUB) ■ Self-assessment and career planning workshop (ULB-VUB) 	I	1 st
2	Training and networking ½ day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Open science and research transparency (VUB) ■ Interdisciplinary research workshop (BrIAS) 	I	3 rd
3	Training and networking ½ day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Adaptive leadership workshop (VUB) ■ Inter-cohort exchange 	II	6 th
4	Training and networking ½ day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Entrepreneurship & Innovation workshop (hub.brussels) ■ Inter-cohort exchange 	II	10 th
5	Training and networking ½ day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Artificial intelligence for the common good training (responsible use of AI in research) (FARI) ■ Inter-cohort exchange 	II	13 th
6	Training and networking (one day) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Advanced communication skills for interdisciplinary research (BrIAS) ■ Diversity, equity and inclusion in collaborations (BeWISE) ■ IRIS days: outreach and public engagement event (VUB/ULB- OpenLabs-citizen science) 	II	16 th
7	Training and networking ½ day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sustainability and responsible research workshop +networking ½ day (Sirris) ■ Inter-cohort exchange 	II	19 th
8	Training and networking ½ day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Policy Engagement and Advocacy training (JRC) ■ Inter-cohort exchange 	II	22 nd
9	Career transition training and networking (1/2 day) (VUB-ULB) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Speed-dating with representatives of the non-academic sector through IRIS consortium networks (eg. EARMA, EC, EUROCIITIES, BeCENTRAL etc) ■ Managing your own research group 	III	25 th
10	Intersectoral and interdisciplinary knowledge transfer workshop ½ day (ULB-VUB -knowledge and tech transfer offices)	III	26 th
11	Closing conference afternoon and evening with EC representatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Poster presentations and elevator pitches by fellows ■ Networking event with representatives of Brussels Research and Innovation ecosystem and regional government. 	III	30 th



Useful documents and links

- [Guide for applicants](#)
- [Guide for evaluators](#)
- [Brussels Innovation plan](#)
- [ULB/VUB research](#) (finding supervisors and joint common centers)
- [Moving and Living in Brussels](#)



More Infosessions
coming soon! Stay tuned
on our [website](#) and
[LinkedIn](#) pages!



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