

## 1. FRESH: A FUND DEDICATED TO HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH

The Government of the French-speaking Community of Belgium created the Human Sciences Research Fund (FRESH – Fonds pour la Recherche en Sciences Humaines). The aim of this Fund is to meet the different and complementary needs of the **fundamental research in social and human sciences**.

The F.R.S.-FNRS Board of Trustees has decided to restrict the call for doctorate grants (term: 2+2 years).

## 2. SCHEDULE

**Opening of the call: Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2025** on [e-space](#) for the online submission.

| INSTRUMENTS           |          | FRESH CALL 2025   |  |  |
|-----------------------|----------|---|--|--|
|                       |          | ELECTRONIC VALIDATION DEADLINES <sup>1</sup> ON E-SPACE |  |  |
|                       |          | APPLICANT   | PROMOTER   | RECTOR   |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Grant | FRESH-B1 | Thursday<br>21 <sup>st</sup> August<br>at 2 p.m.*       | Monday<br>1 <sup>st</sup> September<br>at 2 p.m. | Friday<br>5 <sup>th</sup> September<br>at 2 p.m. |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Grant | FRESH-B2 |   |  |  |

\*Please note that this is a **fixed deadline** and the applicant will not be able to edit, save or submit the application once this deadline has passed. Please make sure that it is submitted on time.

- The F.R.S.-FNRS will give researchers who may be granted with a fellowship renewal (FRESH-B2) access to the electronic form via the [e-space](#) application.
- Applicants pre-selected for a 1<sup>st</sup> FRESH grant will pass an oral examination between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> November 2025 that **must take place at the F.R.S.-FNRS premises** at 1000 Brussels (Belgium). The exact address will be communicated in the e-mail indicating the interview time.

However, in exceptional cases, applicants who are unable to attend are requested to duly justify their situation by email to [auditions-jurys@frs-fnrs.be](mailto:auditions-jurys@frs-fnrs.be) as soon as possible. The emails will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the Bureau of the F.R.S.-FNRS Board of Trustees or the Secretary-General of F.R.S.-FNRS.

Jurys dates are available [here](#).

The precise time of the oral examination, as well as the practical details, will be communicated in October, right after the jury preselection meeting.

- The decision to allocate the grants will be made by the FRESH Board of Trustees in December.

<sup>1</sup> All times are Brussels local time.

### 3. APPENDICES

**3.1 For each instrument**, appendices must be enclosed with the application. For further information, click on the relevant instrument below:

|                             |                          |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>1<sup>ST</sup> GRANT</b> | <a href="#">FRESH-B1</a> |
| <b>2<sup>ND</sup> GRANT</b> | <a href="#">FRESH-B2</a> |

#### 3.2 Deadlines for providing appendices

| <b>DEADLINES IN 2025</b>    |  | <b>DOCUMENTS</b>  |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| <b>1<sup>ST</sup> GRANT</b> | Monday 1 <sup>st</sup> September at 2 p.m. | Opinion letter from the promoter, structured according to the <a href="#">template</a>  |
|                             | Tuesday 30 <sup>th</sup> September         | Appendices (see point 3.1) <sup>2</sup>   |
|                             |  | Opinion letters from:<br>- 1 reference person (different from the promoter) member of the academic staff of a scientific institution, structured according to the <a href="#">template</a> ,<br>- 1 reference person involved in the field outside the academic sphere.<br>They will be contacted by the F.R.S.-FNRS after the promoter's validation. |
|                             |  | <a href="#">Ranking</a> <sup>2</sup> completed by the faculty(ies) awarding undergraduate and master (or equivalent) degrees  |
|                             |  | Publications accepted after the applicant validation deadline <sup>2</sup>  |
| <b>2<sup>ND</sup> GRANT</b> | Friday 31 <sup>st</sup> October            | <a href="#">Advisory recommendation</a> from the Supervisory Panel (Thesis Advisory Committee)  |

### 4. CHANGES COMPARED TO CALL 2024

#### 4.1 [Rules and Regulations](#)

##### Suppression of article 4

From the 2025 call, the eligibility of applications will no longer be directly determined by the fields of the master's degree for the FRESH and FRIA instruments. This means that applicants will have to choose the appropriate instrument purely based on the subject area of their project. For information:

- FRIA (Fund for Research Training in Industry and Agriculture) supports research projects in the exact and natural sciences and in the life and health sciences.
- FRESH (Human Sciences Research Fund) supports research projects in the human and social sciences.

<sup>2</sup> Where applicable, to be uploaded or mentioned by the applicant on a dedicated page at <https://e-space.frs-fnrs.be>, as a follow-up of their application file after the validation deadline set for the applicant.

In addition, applicants whose research projects adopt an interdisciplinary approach will need to choose the most appropriate instrument according to the main research theme(s) associated with their project.

It is essential that the doctoral research project fits in with the themes of the juries associated with each instrument (see below). If this is not the case, the jury may take this aspect into account negatively when assessing the project.

If in doubt about the choice of jury or instrument, it is the responsibility of the applicants to consult their promoter before submitting their application, as no transfer between instruments will be possible once the application has been validated.

Here is the list of [FRESH](#) and [FRIA](#) juries and their associated themes and descriptors fields.

#### **4.2 Jury's division "Economic and social challenges 3" (DES-3)**

Given the large number of applications submitted to the FRESH DES-3 jury and the increase in this number each year, the FRESH Board of Trustees on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2025 has decided to split the DES-3 jury into 2 separate juries, covering the following themes:

- DES-3: Political Science, International Relations; Human and Social Geography, Demography
- DES-4: Sociology, Communication, Science and Technology Studies; Social Anthropology

#### **4.3 Eligibility criteria relating to the seniority of biological or adopting parents**

On 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2024, the F.R.S.-FNRS Board of Trustees decided to increase the maximum eligibility period. It is calculated based on how many years prior the academic degree was obtained:

- Per childbirth: 15 months for mothers and 12 months for biological fathers;
- Per adoption: 12 months for adopting mothers and fathers.

## **5. SPECIFIC REMARKS**

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### **5.1 Grants Renewal**

Applications for a Second FRESH Grant will be evaluated by the Supervisory Panel (Thesis Advisory Committee). Second Grant scheme starts as from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2026.

### **5.2 Only one FRIA/FRESH application**

Applicants are not allowed to apply for both [FRIA](#) and [FRESH](#) instruments in the same year.

### **5.3 Start date of 1<sup>st</sup> grants**

The FRESH 1<sup>st</sup> Grant Scheme starts on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024. The starting date may be postponed upon a duly justified in the application form.

If the FRESH accepts a starting date for a grant after 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024, the grant will be postponed by the number of months between 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024 and the actual starting date of the grant, up to a maximum of 4 months (which means an actual starting date of no later than 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025). No extension will be granted if the starting date of the grant is later than 1<sup>st</sup> February 2025.

## 6. CONTENT OF A PROPOSAL

Applicants will have the choice of writing their proposal either in French or in English.

The F.R.S.-FNRS insists on **strict compliance with the instructions given for each part of the proposal** (scientific section relevant to the instrument selected, number of pages allowed for the documents to be enclosed with the application form...) and stresses again the sovereign consideration of the juries assessing the application file.

**NOTICE: no further change or modification** to the proposal can be made after the validation deadline set for the applicant.

One of the specificities of the FRESH Fund relates to the **societal impact** of the funded research programmes. The FRESH Fund supports fundamental research projects whose outcomes are likely to improve the understanding or functioning of one sector in the society in the short-medium term at a local, regional, national or international level, from many perspectives such as culture, economy, politics, sociology and psychosociology.

Applicants may identify, in their scientific reflection, the potential beneficiaries and/or societal benefits resulting from their research project. Applicants also mention **a reference person substantially involved in the field outside the academic sphere** who will be contacted by the F.R.S.-FNRS to provide an opinion letter as part of their application.

We emphasize the importance of providing this opinion letter. The absence of that letter could be prejudicial to the assessment of the application.

The application file contains the main sections described hereafter.

| SECTION          | CONTENT   |
|------------------|---|
| RESEARCHER       | Information that enables to verify the <b>eligibility criteria</b> (degrees, graduation date, institution)  |
|                  | <b>Academic background</b>  |
|                  | <b>Awards and honours</b> (max. 5)  |
|                  | The applicant's <b>list of publications</b> (published or accepted, if any), structured according to the <a href="#">template</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As stated in section 3.2, in case of <b>publications accepted</b> after the applicant validation deadline, applicants may add them until 30<sup>th</sup> September.</li> </ul>   |
|                  | <b>Professional background</b> , including relevant activities with regard to the research project  |
|                  | Title of the <b>Master's thesis</b>   |
| RESEARCH PROJECT | <b>Title</b> in French and in English (max. 200 characters each, including spaces) and, <b>Abstract</b> in French and in English (max. 2,000 characters each, including spaces) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In case of funding, these are released and made public on the <a href="#">F.R.S.-FNRS website</a>.</li> </ul>  |
|                  | <b>Selection of the jury and selection of 2 to 6 descriptor fields in order of relevance</b> , which can be supplemented by some <b>unrestricted keywords</b> . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If applicants select only one descriptor field corresponding to the <a href="#">jury</a> selected, they shall justify their choice in the application form.</li> </ul>   |
|                  | It is mandatory to use the template: FRESH-B1 ( <a href="#">FR</a> / <a href="#">EN</a> ) - FRESH-B2 ( <a href="#">FR</a> / <a href="#">EN</a> ).<br>The <b>description of the project</b> (max. 4 pages) is divided into 4 parts: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Goals of the research</li> <li>State of the art</li> <li>Research project</li> <li>Work plan</li> </ol> <p>Graphs and tables (max. 2 pages) are allowed in addition to the 4 pages.</p> |

| SECTION                  | CONTENT  |
|--------------------------|--|
|                          | A reference bibliography (max. 1 page) should be included and listed in the order of appearance in the text.   |
|                          | Summary of the 1 <sup>st</sup> year of Ph.D. - For 1 <sup>st</sup> Grant-2 <sup>nd</sup> year applicants only.   |
|                          | Applicants may identify, in their scientific reflection, the potential beneficiaries and/or societal benefits resulting from their research project.   |
| <b>WORK ENVIRONMENT</b>  | <p>Facts allowing to assess whether the environment (the intellectual means and/or equipment available to the applicant) is consistent with the aims of the research project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Data can vary depending on the nature of the project and the scientific field.</i></li> </ul>  |
| <b>REFERENCE PERSONS</b> | <p>Contact details (first name, surname, email) of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1 reference person (different from the promoter) member of the academic staff of a scientific institution,</li> <li>- 1 reference person involved in the field outside the academic sphere.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Applicants shall contact the reference persons prior to mentioning their contact details in the application form to make sure that they are willing to provide an opinion letter following the instructions they will be given.</i></li> </ul> |

By submitting an application form, the applicant renounces all access to the confidential opinion letters related to their application (promoter and reference persons).

No information will be communicated to the applicant on the receipt of the letters to ensure confidentiality.

## 7. (PRE)SELECTION PROCEDURE, JURIES

### 7.1 Composition of juries

**Applications for a 1<sup>st</sup> Grant** will be evaluated by five juries: one is dedicated to cultural challenges, the four others to economic and social challenges.

These 5 juries cover the following subject areas:

- **"Cultural Challenges" jury (DC):** Cultural Anthropology; Art and Architecture; Performing Arts; Contemporary History; History of Pre-Industrial Societies; Languages and Literature; Heritage and Archaeology; Philosophy
- **"Economic and Social Challenges 1" jury (DES-1):** Psychology; Social Psychology; Education Sciences
- **"Economic and Social Challenges 2" jury (DES-2):** Law and Criminology; Economics; Management
- **"Economic and Social Challenges 3" jury (DES-3):** Political Science, International Relations; Human and Social Geography, Demography
- **Economic and Social Challenges 4" jury (DES-4):** Sociology, Communication, Science and Technology Studies; Social Anthropology

The DC jury is made up of 3 civil society representatives and 19 to 21 members, 11 to 13 full members and 8 alternate members, from French-speaking Community of Belgium universities respecting, for the full members, the balance between universities:

- 3 UCLouvain, 3 ULB, 3 ULiège
- 1 or 2<sup>3</sup> UMONS, 1 or 2<sup>3</sup> UNAMUR

The balance between universities for alternate members:

- 2 UCLouvain, 2 ULB, 2 ULiège
- 1 UMONS, 1 UNAMUR

The DES juries are made up of 1 civil society representative and 11 to 13 members from French-speaking Community of Belgium universities, respecting the balance between universities:

- 3 UCLouvain, 3 ULB, 3 ULiège
- 1 or 2<sup>3</sup> UMONS, 1 or 2<sup>3</sup> UNAMUR

Applicants' promoter and co-promoter may not sit or even partially take part in the jury of their applicants.

The composition of the FRESH juries is available [here](#). It is subject to modifications depending on the conflicts of interest (COI) that might be reported by juries' members. The composition also depends on the availability of members, any withdrawal or replacement, and may vary accordingly.

## 7.2 **(Pre)selection procedure**

The Board of Trustees of the F.R.S.-FNRS has decided to establish a **pre-selection** of the application files. Members of the jury will focus on the scientific quality of the application by assessing four criteria as follows: **the research project (40%), the skills of the applicant with regard to their specialty (CV) (40%), the research environment (10%) and the potential societal impact of the project (10%)**. For each criterion, irrespective of their weight, applicants must meet a minimum quality threshold.

**Pre-selected applicants** are required to take an **oral examination**. Each application file is assigned to a rapporteur, depending on the 2-6 descriptor fields selected by the applicant. The applicant is interviewed by the members of the jury and the rapporteur, who leads the discussion.

Juries shall devote 30 minutes at most to each applicant.

The oral presentation of the applicant shall not exceed 10 minutes.

Following the interview and the departure of the applicant the jury shall debate and grade them.

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<sup>3</sup> According to the university's scientific activity in the fields covered by the jury concerned.

## 8. EVALUATION CRITERIA - EVALUATION REPORT

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The evaluation criteria taken into account are the following:

| CRITERIA   |
|--|
| Quality of the research project:<br>Feasibility, originality, host laboratory, work plan, potential societal impact, and activities report<br>(applicable only for applicants to a 1 <sup>st</sup> Grant 2 <sup>nd</sup> Year) |
| Skills of the applicant with regard to their speciality (CV)   |
| Presentation and answers given to questions about the project  |
| Scientific knowledge in general  |

For applicants to a FRESH 1<sup>st</sup> Grant, juries will assess their capability to conduct their doctoral research in 4 years. Depending on the progress of the research work, juries may decide to recommend applicants whether for a 1<sup>st</sup> Grant 1<sup>st</sup> year or 1<sup>st</sup> Grant 2<sup>nd</sup> year.

In accordance with the "European Charter for Researchers", all applicants will receive an evaluation report following the meeting of the FRESH Management Committee in December.

ALL DOCUMENTS, GUIDES, RULES AND REGULATIONS AND PRIVACY POLICY ARE AVAILABLE AT [HTTPS://WWW.FRS-FNRS.BE/EN/REGLEMENTS-GUIDES](https://www.frs-fnrs.be/en/reglements-guides) AND [HTTPS://WWW.FRS-FNRS.BE/EN/CHARTE-VIE-PRIVEE](https://www.frs-fnrs.be/en/charte-vie-privee)

QUESTIONS: [bourses-mandats@frs-fnrs.be](mailto:bourses-mandats@frs-fnrs.be)