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ENLIGHT RISE- RESEARCH AND INNOVATION AGENDA WITH AND FOR SOCIETY: LEVERAGING DIGITAL INNOVATION FOR A GREENER AND HEALTHIER EUROPE

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Progress Report on the creation and awarding of the R&I Prize in the first year of the ENLIGHT RISE programme, the lessons learnt, and outlook for the next editions.

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List of abbreviations

D	Deliverable (within the ENLIGHT RISE project)
DG RTD	The European Commission's Directorate-General for Research and Innovation
EUA	European University Alliance
ECR	Early Career Researcher
GA	Grant Agreement (H2020 SwafS GA number 101035819)"
M	Month, i.e. project month being September 2021 M1, and August 2024 M36
PO	Project Officer
R&I	Research and Innovation
SwafS	the Horizon 2020 <i>Science with and for Society</i> work programme
WP	Work Package
Y	project year (from September 1 st to August 1 st ; Y1 = 2021-2022)

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Introduction

[ENLIGHT](#) is a European University Alliance (EUA) willing to promote equitable quality of life, sustainability, and global engagement through higher education transformation. ENLIGHT brings together [nine comprehensive research-intensive universities](#) from nine European countries.

ENLIGHT has obtained funding from the European Commission in the framework of the Horizon 2020 Science with and for Society (SwafS) work programme. The thus created [ENLIGHT RISE project](#) (Research and Innovation agenda with and for SociEty) seeks to strengthen the research and innovation (R&I) dimension of the ENLIGHT alliance. In synergy with ENLIGHT's educational components and surrounding ecosystems, ENLIGHT RISE strives to deploy a comprehensive joint transformation agenda for our universities.

The R&I Prize is a product of the ENLIGHT RISE Work Package 2 (WP2) which main objective is to create synergies through R&I capacity building and to contribute to establish a common Research & Innovation agenda.

Comprised of three major tasks (groups), WP2 seeks to complement the mapping of expertise in the ENLIGHT Think Tank (cfr. the ENLIGHT Erasmus+ project) by analysing the alliance members' scientific and technological profiles to identify the strongest research synergies leading to maximize the ENLIGHT alliance's competitive advantage (task 2.1).

The *R&I Observatory* (task 2.2) will help identifying the ENLIGHT R&I capacities, whilst focus groups and incentives mechanisms (task 2.3) will enable to establish R&I synergies amongst the alliance's partner universities.

The R&I Prize is one of the incentive mechanisms developed within the cradle of WP2 task 2.3, intended to be awarded yearly (i.e. every project year) throughout the lifespan of the ENLIGHT RISE project (01 September 2021 – 31 August 2024).

This document represents Deliverable 13 (D2.5) of the ENLIGHT RISE project. It is to be considered a progress report on the construction, awarding, evaluation and envisioned future developments of the R&I Prize. It is the first of 3 reports on the R&I Prize throughout the lifespan of the ENLIGHT RISE SwafS funding period: progress report 2 (D14/D2.6) due by December 2023; final report (D15/D2.7) due by September 2024.

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R&I Prize Year 1

Context and intention

Being a new university alliance consisting of university partners who in various research fields have not yet enjoyed previous interactions, the EUA ENLIGHT RISE consortium seeks to create incentives for the launching of several initiatives fostering research & innovation collaborations amongst its partner universities, specifically around the ENLIGHT [flagship domains](#) (health & well-being; digital revolution and impact of digitization; climate change; energy and circular economy; equity).

In addition to that, the consortium i.a. also focuses on early career researchers (ECR) – defined as researchers holding a PhD. less than 10 years –, recognizing their driving force for new initiatives, their imminent need for funding, as well as their necessity to create personal international research networks.

With the intention of combining the abovementioned goals, the ENLIGHT RISE project proposal conceived “the creation of an annual contest / competition to award Prizes for the best ENLIGHT RISE R&I projects on ENLIGHT flagship challenges conducted by early career researchers from 2 or more ENLIGHT partner universities (...)”. The prizes, thus to be considered as seed funding, were to “primarily consist of travel awards to attend a specialized conference, workshop, or training programme that will contribute to capacity building in ENLIGHT”.

The creation of the Prize(s) was added to WP2 as Task 2.3.2 “Create incentives for launching joint R&I projects around flagship challenges (M6-36)”.

Concept

During its meeting of February 18th, 2022, the ENLIGHT RISE WP2 assembly discussed Task 2.3.2 and after deliberating different options and concepts decided to create the annual *ENLIGHT CONSORTIUM R&I PRIZE* as a two-step system allocating not only travel awards but also a proper ENLIGHT R&I Prize. In this two-fold design, only awardees of a travel award are eligible for the ENLIGHT R&I Prize. The intention thereof, is to first incentivize ECRs towards collaborative ENLIGHT R&I projects, and then in a second phase reward amongst those projects the most promising one.

With regards to the selection committee for both the travel awards as the R&I prize, WP2 decided to populate the committee with 9 members: one (1) task member of each ENLIGHT RISE WP2 (co)-lead partner university (i.e. University of Bordeaux, Ghent University, University of the Basque Country, University of Tartu), added to the coordinators of each of the five (5) pilot focus groups (WP2 Task 2.3.1). Considering the likelihood that for the first selection period/year the pilot focus groups would not (all) have been created yet – and to bridge with the ENLIGHT E+ project – it was decided that for the first year of the prize the 5 heads of the pilot focus groups would be replaced by the heads of the five ENLIGHT E+ Think Thanks/Core Groups.

The call for the first ENLIGHT R&I Prize was published/launched in July 2022 (with deadline October 1st, 2022) with a retro-active character for the R&I Prize to cover the entire first project year of ENLIGHT

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RISE project. The call was widely disseminated and promoted both by the alliance as by the ENLIGHT partners universities through different channels as i.a. the ENLIGHT website and [ENLIGHT funding webpage](#), the ENLIGHT newsletters, the ENLIGHT Twitter account, partner universities' funding pages and social media, as well as via specifically target group directed mailings by all partner institutes.

Further details on this system, eligibility, selection criteria, submission and reporting are explained at length in the actual call and application form, both below inserted within this report.

The call for the ENLIGHT CONSORTIUM R&I PRIZE Y1

ENLIGHT CONSORTIUM R&I PRIZE

Call for R&I projects and initiatives around the ENLIGHT flagship areas between early career researchers from different ENLIGHT consortium partners.
(ENLIGHT R&I PRIZE)

In the framework of this call, the [ENLIGHT consortium](#) will grant travel/mobility awards and the ENLIGHT R&I Prize Award for the best R&I (envisioned) projects and project proposals jointly conducted by early career researchers from different (minimum 2) ENLIGHT consortium partners. In a first phase, selected project proposals will receive an ENLIGHT R&I Prize Travel Award to help deepen the envisioned plans (new or ongoing) for collaboration. The aim of this seed money is to stimulate and support (new) ENLIGHT RISE R&I collaborations and projects on ENLIGHT flagship challenges between early career researchers from various/different consortium partners. In a second phase, the awarded projects making promising progress towards a consolidated joint R&I collaboration after having received the travel award will automatically be selected as candidates for the annual ENLIGHT R&I Prize.

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The annual ENLIGHT R&I Prize

Concept:

The ENLIGHT R&I Prize is an annual competition awarding promising joint collaborations – in research fields linked to the [5 ENLIGHT flagship domains](#) – between early career researchers from different ENLIGHT consortium partners. The aim is not only to enhance overall R&I collaborations between ENLIGHT consortium partners, moreover, to support early career researchers in expanding their network.

The design of the prize is two-fold. While the first part consists of seed funding through an open call for travel awards to (further) elaborate collaboration ideas, the second part is the actual ENLIGHT R&I Prize, annually presented during the ENLIGHT General Meeting rewarding the most promising result of the initiatives having received a travel award in the first phase of the ENLIGHT R&I Prize.

Applying project proposals must contribute to the research mission of ENLIGHT, and hence focus on the development of (new) joint research initiatives amongst ENLIGHT partners. These research initiatives must focus on the 5 ENLIGHT flagship domains and correspond to major societal challenges and priorities (health and well-being, climate action, energy transition and circular economy, digital innovation (AI / Open Science), and equity).

Phase 1: The ENLIGHT R&I Prize Travel Award

The ENLIGHT R&I Prize is intended as seed money to support the development stage or further elaboration of joint research activities conducted by early career researchers of different (minimum 2) ENLIGHT consortium partners, e.g. the initiation, design and/or development of one (or more) joint research proposals to be submitted to regional, national or international funding agencies including the Horizon Europe framework programme, etc.

The first phase of the ENLIGHT R&I Prize therefore aims to facilitate in-person meetings and mobility between these early career researchers to concretize their collaboration, and/or to help them acquire necessary skills required to further elaborate their idea/project.

Applying projects therefore can apply for the following two activities:

1. outgoing mobility of staff and PhD students to participate in meetings at one of the other ENLIGHT partners with the purpose of setting up new or enlarging already existing bilateral or multilateral research collaborations. Only the mobility costs (travel and subsistence) of the applicant are eligible.
2. attendance to a specialized conference, workshop, or training programme to enhance capacity needed for the envisioned joint project. Only the mobility costs (travel and subsistence) and inscription fees of the applicant are eligible.

Each yearly edition, about 10 travel awards are foreseen to be awarded of maximum EUR 500.- each. Only the mobility costs (travel and subsistence) and/or the inscription fee of the applicant are eligible, and the funding will be through reimbursement of proven expenditures. Reimbursement will be done by the University of Bordeaux's administration to the applicant's home institute for further internal allocation.

Applying projects can apply for maximum three individual travel awards per project. In case of selection, it will be up to the selection committee to decide how many travel awards it will allocate to each selected project.

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In case of outgoing mobility to attend meetings at an ENLIGHT consortium partner, a financial commitment (co-funding) of the receiving ENLIGHT partner is advised (share in organizational costs or mobility). Recommended for joint research related ENLIGHT activities, is that the 'sending' university accounts for the funding of travel and accommodation of the own outgoing staff and PhD students/researchers while the host university accounts for any organizational costs of the activity applied for. In this respect, the seed funding R&I Prize Travel Award can be used by the sending university to support the researchers' mobility.

Phase 2: The ENLIGHT R&I Prize Award

Awardees of the first phase will automatically apply for the second phase once the report (cfr. below) of the first phase has been accepted by the ENLIGHT R&I Prize Secretariat. Projects can thus not directly solicit nor apply for prize but will be considered for the ENLIGHT R&I Prize Award upon their selection for the ENLIGHT R&I Prize Travel Award and the acceptance of their report (of which they will be duly notified by the prize secretariat).

The selection will be done annually beginning of November, and the award winner will be contacted prior to the award ceremony.

The winner of the ENLIGHT R&I Prize will be announced annually during the ENLIGHT General Meeting. The prize consists of maximum EUR 1,500.- to be used for (or reimbursement of) registration, attendance, mobility costs, etc. of a conference, workshop, or training programme to enhance capacity needed for the project. The funding will be through reimbursement of proven expenditures and will be done by the University of Bordeaux's administration to the applicant's home institute for further internal allocation.

Criteria

Who can apply:

Staff members (including doctoral researchers/students) of ENLIGHT consortium partners:

- the main applicant(s), beneficiary(/ies), or project leader(s) must be (an) early career researcher(s) (i.e. doctoral student or a researcher who has obtained the PhD title no longer than 9 years prior to the R&I Prize application date)
- an eligible project (or the reimbursed activity) must include members of minimum two different ENLIGHT consortium partners.

Disciplinary field:

Proposals should focus on one of the 5 the ENLIGHT [flagship domains](https://www.enlight-eu.org/university-about-us/flagship-domains) (health and well-being, climate action, energy transition and circular economy, digital innovation (AI / Open Science), and equity) as described on the above linked webpage (<https://www.enlight-eu.org/university-about-us/flagship-domains>).

Activities eligible for funding:

The present call targets the organization, creation, and exploration of (new) joint R&I activities and opportunities between ENLIGHT partners and will provide travel awards for the project members to meet in-person or to attend a specialised training, conference or workshop related to the project:

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- the mobility / travel award therefore must be used to physically meet amongst the project members to prepare the project, or to jointly attend a specialized conference, workshop, or training programme to enhance capacity needed for the project.
- the activity (mobility) must be / have been conducted between September 1st 2021 and October 1st 2022.

Deadline

The call for the first annual ENLIGHT R&I Prize is open on a permanent basis until October 1st, 2022.

Selection

The selection of applying project proposals will be based on following criteria:

- Accordance with the [overall ENLIGHT objective/mission](#)
- Role of the applicant in the project
- Feasibility
- Innovative character
- Sustainability
- Involvement of the [Regional Academies](#) (i.e. focus on quadruple helix)

The selection commission will be composed of experts on the [ENLIGHT flagship domains](#) and one (1) task member of each ENLIGHT RISE WP2 (co)-lead partner university. Prior to the proclamation of the awardees, the ENLIGHT RISE WP2 assembly will validate the pre-selected winners.

How to apply?

Applications are made through the [designated form](#) and sent as a PDF-document to rise@ugent.be.

The document should be named as follows:

ENLIGHT_R-I_Prize_-_surname_MainApplicant_name_MainApplicant

Reporting of awarded prizes

Within one month after the end of the funded activity (and/or no later the October 20th, 2022), a short report (max. 1 A4), signed by the main applicant, together with the proven expenditure, must be sent electronically to rise@ugent.be.

Upon acceptance of the report, the project will be notified of its pre-selection for the ENLIGHT R&I Prize Award, and the applicant's home partner institute will be reimbursed the ENLIGHT R&I Prize Travel Award.

To be eligible for the ENLIGHT R&I Prize Award, the report should illustrate the progress of the idea/concept/project since the awarding of the ENLIGHT R&I Prize Travel Award. (i.e. the reimbursed activity).

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The application form 2021-2022

ENLIGHT CONSORTIUM R&I PRIZE

Call for ENLIGHT R&I initiatives

Application Form 2021-2022

1. Proposal title + Acronym

2. Please indicate the flagship domain your project relates to

- Health and Well-being
- Digital revolution and Impact of digitization
- Climate change
- Energy and Circular economy
- Equity

3. Main focus of the proposal (Please also state the involved ENLIGHT Consortium partners¹)

4. Personal details of the (Main) applicant

Full Name	
Position	
Faculty/Research Unit/Department	
ENLIGHT University	
Email	

5. Personal details of any other ENLIGHT applicants (only in case of a multiple application; max. 3 travel awards can be awarded per proposal)

Full Name	
Position	
Faculty/Research Unit/Department	
ENLIGHT University	
Email	

Please copy the above table as many times as needed

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6. Personal details of ENLIGHT partners (i.e. researchers) involved (not applying for a travel award)

Full Name	
Position	
Faculty/Research Unit/Department	
ENLIGHT University	
Email	

Please copy the above table as many times as needed

7. General description of the initiative/project and the role of the applicant in the project (max. 600 words)

8. Main objectives and output (max. 250 words)

9. Timing of planned activities of the preparatory phase and implementation (max. 250 words)

10. Parallel applications

Did you or will you apply for funding for these activities at any other organisation/grant or call?

No

Yes

⇒ Please further explain to which organisation, grant or call, and for what amount and which specific activities (max. 200 words):

11. Budget

Cost type	Description	Amount
Travel	<i>unit costs, #persons</i>	€ ...
Subsistence	<i>unit costs, #persons</i>	€ ...
Organization	<i>Venue, catering, other</i>	€ ...
	TOTAL	€ ...

12. Annexes (programme, invitation mail/letter, call text, ... please number and specify)

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Annexe 1:

Annexe 2:

...

**KINDLY SEND IN YOUR APPLICATION FILE TO
RISE@UGENT.BE NO LATER THEN OCTOBER 1st, 2022**

Applications result

By the end of the application deadline, two (2) applications were received. Unfortunately, both applications resulted ineligible.

Not only did both application budgets exceed the set limited amount of the ENLIGHT R&I Prize Travel Award, moreover none of the entered applications explained how the described mobility – for which funding was requested – would serve the final purpose of one of the fundable activities as stated in the call. On top of that, the envisioned mobility of one of the applications fell outside of the fundable/specified time span as stipulated in the call.

Since no eligible application was received, the WP2 assembly decided (in its meeting of October 10th, 2022) not to allocate any travel awards nor an ENLIGHT R&I Prize in year 1, and to transfer the reserved funding for Y1 to Y2.

Lessons learned

The disappointing result of Y1 was evaluated both by the WP2 co-leads in a specific meeting on the topic on October 4th, 2022, as by the WP2 assembly in its beforementioned meeting of October 10th, 2022, with the intention to adapt the call for Y2 accordingly.

Five major reasons for the low response were identified:

1. *Limited funding amount*

Throughout the application period many researchers proclaimed that although the application process was very simple and not time-consuming, the amount of the travel award (i.e. € 500,-) was just not worth the effort and not sufficiently attractive. WP2 Members identified this as the major shortcoming of the Y1 concept since feedback had already showed that various funding officers and/or research support officers/offices did not promote the R&I Prize since the travel award in no case would cover the actual mobility cost, for which applicants would always direct their attention and efforts towards more appealing and comprehensive calls for mobility awards.

WP 2 hence evaluated that if the R&I prize was to be attractive and appealing, it would be imperative to raise the amount per mobility award, consequently also leading to a lower number of travel awards.

2. *Retro-active character and funding*

Applying for the reimbursement of a past mobility or activity resulted complicated and unusual. Once paid for, the urge to seek for and put effort into a redemption of a past

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mobility or inscription fee is not on the priority list of researchers and comes across as too administrative and time-consuming.

The unanimous feeling therefore is that future calls should be oriented towards future events, i.e. applicants should be entered for the funding of an event/mobility to come.

3. *'Prize award' deflects from mobility character*

Perhaps the concept of the dual /two-fold design and awarding process of the call was complicated and/or confusing for many researchers and therefore – also considering the minor price/mobility fee – withheld and discouraged researchers from applying. The assessment was made that future calls should emphasize the mobility aspect of the call and speak of mobility awards, rather than focusing on the awarding of a prize.

4. *Closed timeframe for eligible activities*

Since researchers probably mainly look for funding during the period, they organize their mobility and effectuate the inscription to events/conferences, the timespan during which the call was open (4 months during the summer period) limited the number of researchers that could be attracted to the call.

The WP members esteem that the effectiveness, relevance, and attractiveness of the travel awards/the R&I Prize would be far greater with an open call not indicating specific limited dates for refundable mobilities.

5. *Publication period*

Launching the call in July when most researchers start or prepare their summer recess was evaluated as not the ideal period. Although the call was widely published and promoted several times during and after summer recess, it did not stand out nor resonate amongst researchers.

WP 2 considered that the call would be more effective through a continuous call system enabling researchers to apply at any period of the year when the need for mobility support emerges.

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Outlook Y2 & Y3: Renewed concept R&I PRIZE

Based on the abovementioned evaluation, the WP2 meeting has decided to accordingly adapt the concept of the ENLIGHT RISE R&I Prize.

In its meeting of October 10th, 2022, the decision was adopted that the outline of the new concept should thus be that of a continuously open call for future mobilities and/or participation to an event, to be hosted after receipt of the application and before the ending of the funding of the ENLIGHT RISE SwafS project (August 31st, 2024).

With the call being open, evaluation/selection of the received applications will be continuous and awarded on a first come, first serve basis. A fixed amount of mobility awards will be awarded for Y2 and Y3. Consequently, once the number of awards for a specific year has been allocated, the call for that specific year will be closed and the call for the next year will be opened.

The renewed R&I Prize will however uphold its two-fold character. At the end of each project year, the selection committee will evaluate the final reports of the mobility awards allocated in the respective year and select a winner of the ENLIGHT R&I Prize.

Finally, the WP2 assembly decided to increase the amount of the mobility award and the R&I Prize, by doubling it to € 1,000.- for the travel award, and raising it to a still unspecified amount higher than the original € 1,500.- for the ENLIGHT R&I Prize (workshop award). The ENLIGHT RISE Coordinator has thereto contacted the DG RTD PO informing her of this decision, since this implies a reduction in the number of awards.

During its meeting of November 18th, 2022, (post factum the editing of this report) the WP2 assembly will further discuss the outline and needed changes of the proposal for a renewed R&I Prize, with the intention to take the final decision during its meeting on December 16th, 2022, to be able to launch the Y2 R&I Prize no later than by the end of January 2023.

The outcome, concept, and evaluation of the R&I Prize Y2 will be attended to in D15/2.6, to be submitted by December 2023.