La Rochelle Université

FRANCE 2030

ExcelLR Project

Call for proposals: Project of Excellence 2026

Guidance Document

univ-larochelle.fr

Summary

1. Context and description

Anchored in a coastal region characterized by diverse landscapes, biodiversity, and economic activities, and exposed to natural and anthropogenic risks, La Rochelle University (LRUniv) has developed a scientific strategy tailored to this context, focused on **sustainability and resilience in coastal areas**.

Through multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and even transdisciplinary approaches, these different disciplines are mobilized to produce fundamental knowledge and concrete solutions to:

1. **Understand and model** the natural dynamics specific to this coastal territory;
2. **Design** modeling tools based in particular on artificial intelligence to help observe, understand, predict, and decide;
3. **Innovate** in serving sustainable development and global health objectives;
4. **Support** coastal and retro-coastal societies in their transition in the face of climate change.

This approach is supported since June 2022, by the "ExcelLR" project, of which the university is a beneficiary, funded under the Future Investment Plan No. 4 (2022-2032) that will enable LRUniv to consolidate its new model over a period of 10 years.

This call for projects is part of the initiatives under Pillar 1 – Research. Projects submitted under this call may only be led by researchers from La Rochelle University's research units.

The objective of the "Project of Excellence" call for proposals is **to support high-level, innovative research projects focused on societal issues in the coastal, urban, sustainable, and smart sectors. Projects must generate new knowledge that will help better understand and shed light on current challenges regarding the sustainability of coastal areas.**

For the year 2026, 7 themes have been selected.

Four themes are open to proposals from researchers in all disciplines (1.1).

To support the specific dynamics of the humanities and social sciences (HSS), three themes (1.2) are exclusively reserved for proposals led by HSS researchers, even though projects may include researchers from other disciplines.

Projects jointly led with staff from a national research organization such as IRD, IFREMER, BRGM, INRIA, etc., will be particularly appreciated.

The themes selected for the "Project of Excellence" calls for proposals are described below.

If you have any questions about whether your research fits within a particular theme, please feel free to contact us at: virginia.kolb@univ-lr.fr

1. 1. Topics open for proposals from all disciplines

Under these topics, projects must generate new knowledge that will help better understand and shed light on current challenges regarding the sustainability of coastal zones. They may focus on understanding, monitoring, observing, and analyzing a variety of themes.

- **Water and Hydrosystems**

Water is the primary component of living organisms and an essential element for all forms of life. There are numerous links between hydromorphological and ecological processes, and these can

take various forms. Water is a resource, a living environment, and a vital element for climate regulation, ecosystem functioning, and human development. Disruptions to natural cycles can directly impact its availability and quality. Water is a flow passing through soils, societies, and ecosystems; it is also a vector for organisms and contamination between different environments.

Domain and keywords: Coastal adaptability, desalination, coastal protection, environmental risk simulation, land-sea continuum, water quality, water quantity, sea level, salinization, resource availability, hydromorphological functioning, water mobility, management, governance, ecological restoration, inequalities in access, land-use conflicts, environmental justice, chemical contamination, sentinel species. *(Non-exhaustive list)*

- **Artificial Intelligence**

Artificial intelligence (AI) is playing an increasingly important role in driving sustainable change across coastal and marine environments. Artificial intelligence offers strong support for environmental decision-making by helping to process complex data, anticipate outcomes, and fine-tune day-to-day operations.AI holds great promise in the scientific field, particularly through the opportunities it presents, but it also poses real environmental challenges that must be analyzed and addressed to ensure it becomes a key technology supporting the ecological transition.

Domain and keywords: Numerical simulation, transfer issues, sustainability, neural networks, machine learning models, resolution of coastal and shoreline data, complex dynamics, land-sea continuum, responsible artificial intelligence, usability, energy efficiency, security, personal data protection, artificial intelligence for the common good, energy transition, environmental excellence, image analysis, AI and biodiversity, big data analysis, anthropogenic impacts, change prediction, artificial intelligence and the environment. *(Non-exhaustive list)*

- **Coastal Livability**

Climate change, rising sea levels, and increase in extreme weather events make coastlines vulnerable areas facing numerous economic, social, ecological, and political challenges. Marine and coastal environments form a closely interconnected system where land and sea meet and constantly interact. Today, 40 to 60% of the world's population lives along coastlines. These areas are home to exceptional biodiversity and play a key role in regulating the climate and natural cycles. They are subject to significant pressures, resulting in direct and indirect effects on environmental condition. These territories are particularly relevant areas for experimentation and innovation to implement sustainable solutions.

Domain and keywords: Combined effects, global changes, coastal risks, climate change, biodiversity loss, social crises, sea level, pollution, attractiveness, material sustainability, vulnerability, ecosystem resilience, living patterns, environmental quality, planning, green building, sensors, AI, digital twins, habitat evolution, environmental pressures, anthropogenic pressures, adaptive capacity, sustainable management, preferred/available habitats, land-use conflicts, maritime traffic, contamination. *(Non-exhaustive list)*

- **Alternative Energy**

Alternative energies are derived from sources that do not deplete natural resource stocks or destroy the environment; they therefore encompass energy sources that offer a sustainable solution to the problems posed by conventional fossil fuels. Alternative energies represent the greatest hope for decarbonizing the economy and strengthening the ecological transition of regions. The use of these energies requires a paradigm shift and raises questions regarding resources, production, storage, technology, and impacts.

Domain and keywords: Energy storage, marine and wind energy, algal biomass, biofuels, bio-based materials, renewable energy, energy transition, eco-responsible buildings, inequalities, environmental impacts of construction sites, marine biodiversity, ecosystem functioning, energy self-sufficiency. *(Non-exhaustive list)*

1. 2. Topics open only for proposal lead by a researcher in the humanities and social sciences

Under these topics, projects must be led by a researcher in the humanities and social sciences and must generate new knowledge that will help better understand and shed light on current challenges related to the sustainability of coastal areas. They may focus on understanding, monitoring, observing, and analyzing a variety of themes.

- **Circulation in a Globalized World**

Circulation in a globalized world concerns various aspects of the lives of societies and individuals. It manifests as flows of material and immaterial goods exchanged between spaces, territories, and societies. In the era of globalization, we are witnessing an increase in the circulation of ideas, norms, cultures, and populations, leading to a redefinition of territories and societies.

Domain and keywords: Area studies, circulation of ideas, norms and cultures, multi-scale human migration and mobility, and the hybridization of research and creation. *(Non-exhaustive list)*

- **Environment and Territories in Transition**

The transition of environments and territories is a process of profound and often gradual change. It can involve several fields, such as ecology, energy, urban planning, or economics, and requires collaboration among various stakeholders. More specifically, the ecological transition aims to preserve a viable and habitable Earth for present and future generations, and thus embodies a principle of equity whereby all human beings should be able to benefit from a healthy environment, regardless of the era or place in which they live.

Domain and keywords: Impact of global changes on coastal areas and islands, land-use conflicts, resource management, regulation, standards, perceptions of nature, natural heritage, cultural heritage. *(Non-exhaustive list)*

- **Digital Technologies, AI, and Society**

Artificial intelligence is one of the technologies transforming our society. It promises to generate productivity gains, improve well-being, and help provide solutions to global challenges such as climate change, resource depletion, and health crises. In the humanities and social sciences, machine learning algorithms enable progress and provide new tools for processing and modeling complex data and processes, with enormous potential benefits. Their use raises a number of questions relating, among other things, to human values, equity, human agency, privacy protection, security, and accountability.

Domain and keywords: Artificial intelligence, data, governance, societies and techno-scientific changes, digital transformation, platforms, regulations. *(Non-exhaustive list)*

2. Eligibility requirements

The project must be led by one or more teacher-research or permanent researchers from LRUniv research units.

The project must have been approved and signed by the research unit head before being submitted.

In the case of a project for which doctoral fellowship funding is being requested, **the application must also include the Doctoral School's opinion regarding doctoral supervision.**

3. Funding

Funding requested through ExcelLR may cover:

- Either the salary of a doctoral student for a period of 18 months or 36 months, as well as an operating grant of €20,000 for the duration of the thesis.

- Or the salary of a postdoctoral researcher for a period of 12 months, as well as an operating grant of €10,000 for the duration of the postdoctoral fellowship.

The project may last from 24 to 48 months (the duration of the contract plus one year). Expenses must be incurred during the project period.

A detailed budget including revenue and the main expense categories must be provided (see form).

It is strongly recommended that the application include one or more sources of co-funding, (the status of the co-funding secured, requested, or planned must be specified).

To ensure the project runs smoothly, it must begin no later than 12 months after notification of funding approval.

4. Open science

As part of the France 2030 initiative managed by the ANR, the project must comply with the following open science requirements.

- Requirement to deposit peer-reviewed publications in open access: in all cases, deposit in HAL-La Rochelle
- Open access requirement for research data under the condition: "as open as possible, as closed as necessary."
- Requirement for a data management plan (DMP) for all projects that generate or reuse data, to be completed within 3 months of the project's start.
- Recommendation for open access for all outputs other than publications and data (software, models, applications, etc.)

5. Dissemination and valorization of results

Addressing socio-environmental challenges, the project must define its societal impact and the dissemination of results. Particular attention will be paid to the transfer of knowledge to the public through initiatives to promote scientific literacy and/or the transfer of results to socio-economic stakeholders by describing their innovation potential. The project's impact may also be considered in terms of supporting public policies implemented in coastal regions.

6. Selection process

Initially, projects will be reviewed by at least 2 external evaluators from the European Science Foundation. If any possible conflicts of interest are identified, please provide us with the names of the potential experts you wish to exclude.

Once the university has received the evaluations, the ExcelLR Governing Board composed by the scientific partners of the project, the president of the university and its vice president for Research, will meet and select the projects to be funded.

7. Commitment of the project leader

The beneficiary agrees to:

- Display on various media:
  - the project reference number funding this initiative, "ANR-21-EXES-0010"
  - the mention of France 2030
  - the France 2030 logo

Example: "This work was supported by a government grant administered by the National Research Agency under the France 2030 Plan, grant number ANR-21-EXES-0010."

- Comply with Open Science requirements (see above);
- Provide a detailed project report and a statement of expenses in accordance with the funder's requirements;
- Be available to present the project and initial results.

8. Application Submission Procedures

The application package consists of the project submission form along with its appendices. Before submission, all documents must be signed by the research unit and the doctoral school if applicable.

Applications must be submitted no later than **June, 28th 2026,** to: **excellr.recherche@univ-lr.fr**

9. Provisional Timeline

Application period opens: **April, 8, 2026**

Application deadline: **June, 28, 2026**

Review and evaluation of projects: **July to October 2026**

Announcement of results: **November 2026**

For further information, please contact

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