FAQ

WEL-T INVESTIGATOR PROGRAMME

CALL 2026

Please be aware that this document can be amended along WEL-T call 2026 but the FRFS-WEL-T 2026 regulations and guide for applicants remain the prevailing documents of the call.

WHAT IS THE SCOPE OF THE WEL-T INVESTIGATOR PROGRAMME?

The WEL-T Investigator Programme supports strategic fundamental research of excellence in engineering, chemistry and physics, with a view to developing breakthrough innovations for industrial applications aimed at sustainable transition.
Applicants are expected to demonstrate:

- scientific excellence;
- awareness of unmet sustainable transition needs in their field; and
- an understanding of the strategy required to translate their discoveries into practical applications for the industrial sector.

Possible valorisation routes may include among other possibilities: prototype devices, open source or commercialized software, licensing or consultation on technological implementation of generated intellectual property, industrial collaboration or spin-offs.

WHAT ARE THE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA?

The PI must belong to one of the eligible categories specified in the Regulations.
Eligible applicants may include:

- Research Associates, Senior Research Associates or Research Directors of the F.R.S.-FNRS;
- active fellows of an ongoing Ulysse Incentive Grant for Mobility in Scientific Research (MISU);
- researchers carrying out a FED-tWIN mandate throughout the four-year programme;
- researchers appointed at an eligible university of the French-speaking Community of Belgium, subject to the appointment conditions specified at article 5 of the Regulations.

The applicant must also meet the eligibility conditions of the selected instrument:

Starting
The applicant must:

- hold a doctoral degree (PhD);
- have held the doctoral degree for a maximum of 12 years, subject to the extensions provided for childbirth or adoption;
- demonstrate scientific autonomy.

Advanced
The instrument is open to researchers:

- with more than 12 years of seniority after PhD;
- who have previously been awarded a Starting Grant in an FRFS-WELBIO or FRFS-WEL-T call, regardless of their seniority.

NEW QUESTION

CAN A CANDIDATE HOLDING A PROBATIONARY POSITION APPLY TO WEL-T INVESTIGATOR PROGRAMME 2026?

The WEL-T research programmes are led by a Principal Investigator (PI) and have a duration of four years, divided into two two-year funding periods. By submitting an application, the candidate commits to leading the project for the full four-year duration.
If a probationary position does not meet this requirement, the application must be accompanied by a letter of support from the Head of Institution.

Please note that, as WEL-T funding is awarded on the basis of the PI's profile and is personal and non-transferable, if the PI leaves the institution during the implementation of the funded programme, no replacement of the PI will be possible, and the research agreement will be terminated.

WHAT ARE THE CUMULATION AND RESUBMISSION RULES?

- A PI may submit only one application (Starting or Advanced) under the WEL-T Investigator Programme 2026.
- A PI who obtained funding under the WEL-T Investigator Programme 2024 cannot submit a new application under the 2026 call.
- An applicant who applied under the WEL-T Investigator Programme / WELBIO Investigator Programme but did not receive funding may resubmit an application under the 2026 call (the applicant will be asked to indicate how the project has been modified based on the previous Scientific Commission's feedback)
- The WEL-T and WELBIO programmes cannot be cumulated : a PI who obtained funding under the WELBIO Investigator Programme 2023 or 2025 calls cannot submit an application under the present WEL-T call.

WHAT IS THE DEADLINE FOR THE PI TO VALIDATE THE APPLICATION?

The Principal Investigator must electronically validate the application by:
Thursday, 5 November 2026 at 2:00 p.m.
All times are Brussels local time. The calendar of the call is indicated in the: **Mini-Guide**

HOW LONG DOES THE WEL-T RESEARCH PROGRAMME LAST?

The research programme spans a total of four years, divided from a budgetary perspective into:

- a first two-year funding period;
- a second two-year funding period.

The transition from the first to the second period is subject to administrative reconduction.

IS THE SECOND TWO-YEAR PERIOD AUTOMATICALLY GRANTED?

No.
At the end of the first two years, an application including the budget for years 3 and 4 must be submitted via e-space. This application is subject to an administrative check process. The total budget for years 3 and 4 is limited to the total amount granted for years 1 and 2. Renewal is carried out within the limits of the financial resources available to the FRFS for the WEL-T strategic axis and provided that there are no serious ethical or productivity issues.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO SUBMIT A JOINT APPLICATION, FOR EXAMPLE WITH TWO PIS FROM TWO DIFFERENT UNIVERSITIES?

No.

The WEL-T programme is mono-university and it is led by a Principal Investigator (PI) who is the person responsible for the scientific and administrative management of the funded research programme.
The research programme must be conducted within an eligible university of the French-speaking Community of Belgium mentioned at appendix 1 of the Rules and Regulations.

CAN COLLABORATORS FROM UNIVERSITIES OUTSIDE THE FRENCH-SPEAKING COMMUNITY OF BELGIUM BE INCLUDED IN THE BUDGET?

The PI can indicate collaborations with other researchers from other universities, but no budget can be allocated to the collaborators.
However, subcontracting expenses are eligible and include remuneration for services performed by third parties on behalf of the research programme.

IS THE RESEARCH PROJECT PROPOSAL STRUCTURED SIMILARLY TO A REGULAR FNRS RESEARCH PROJECT?

The project proposal should be filled in on e-space in English. It follows the same structure as the PDR, but the questions are more specific, including a section dedicated to the programme's potential for valorization.
The PI should provide, for example, information regarding his eligibility, project description, publication and research strategy, most important publications from the last five years, team composition, valorization, required budget, and other sources of funding.
The PI must use the appropriate templates for the following sections:
Scientific part - **Source of funding** - **Main collaborators**

IS INTERDISCIPLINARITY EVALUATED? IS IT MANDATORY?

The interdisciplinarity is not required and is not listed as a separate mandatory evaluation criterion.
However, if the project presents an interdisciplinary approach, the PI is invited to elaborate on these aspects in the scientific section.

BECAUSE PATENTING IS AN OBJECTIVE, WILL REVIEWERS BE ASKED TO SIGN NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENTS?

Yes. The evaluation procedure includes explicit confidentiality obligations.
Reviewers and members of the Scientific Commission, including university observers, are bound by confidentiality obligations concerning information related to the evaluation process. Experts must also comply with conflict-of-interest requirements.

WHAT IS EXPECTED IN TERMS OF VALORISATION?

Valorisation is one of the three explicit evaluation criteria.
Applicants must demonstrate an understanding of the strategy required:

- to protect intellectual property that may emerge from the proposed programme;
- to translate it into practical applications that could be exploited on the market.

Possible valorisation routes mentioned in the Regulations include:

- prototype devices;
- open-source or commercialised software;
- licensing;
- consultancy;
- industrial collaboration;
- spin-offs.

The specific questions of the valorisation part of the online form are available here.
Applicants are encouraged to consult the Technology Transfer Office (TTO) of their university.

IS HAVING AN INDUSTRIAL OR SPIN-OFF PARTNER POSITIVE FOR GRANT EVALUATION AND VALORISATION, OR COULD IT BE SEEN AS A LIMITATION?

An industrial collaboration or spin-off is explicitly mentioned as one of the possible routes towards practical application and valorisation.
However, the programme is expected to have full freedom to use future intellectual property generated by the proposed research.
The following existing elements must be disclosed with the support of the university TTO, together with any potential constraints on the freedom to use future IP:

- industrial contracts;
- licences;
- collaborations;
- spin-off arrangements;
- material transfer agreements (MTAs) and data transfer agreements (DTAs), including any reach-through rights
- ethical aspects (informed consent forms restricting the commercial use of results derived from human samples or data)

A collaboration that significantly restricts the freedom to use or valorise future IP could therefore raise an issue.

IF I HAVE NO VALORISATION EXPERIENCE, DOES THAT MEAN THAT MY CHANCES OF SUCCESS ARE ZERO?

The Regulations do not list previous valorisation experience as an eligibility requirement.
What is required is that the applicant demonstrates an understanding of the strategy needed to:

- protect potential intellectual property;
- translate the results into practical applications that could be exploited on the market.

IF AN INDUSTRIAL COLLABORATION EXISTS BUT DOES NOT AFFECT FUTURE IP GENERATED BY THE PROJECT, SHOULD I INDICATE "NOT APPLICABLE" OR EXPLAIN THE SITUATION?

The application requires the PI, with support from the university TTO, to indicate:

- whether existing MTAs and/or industrial contracts exist;
- their potential link with the proposed research programme; and

- any potential constraint on the freedom to use future IP.

Where an industrial collaboration exists and is potentially relevant to the proposed programme, it is therefore preferable to disclose it and clearly explain its relationship with the programme, even if it does not create any constraint on future IP.

ARE PREVIOUS EU OR INTERNATIONAL GRANTS IMPACTING POSITIVELY OR NEGATIVELY ON THE PROPOSAL?

The Regulations do not directly target EU or international grants. As such, these funding sources will not be considered as limitation. Previous international or European funding may nevertheless be relevant as part of the applicant's scientific track record, since the quality of the applicant is one of the evaluation criteria.

Other sources of funding (national, European, or international) should be listed in the **Source of funding** section, indicating whether there is any scientific or budgetary overlap between these sources of funding and the proposed WEL-T programme.

Overlap in itself is not problematic. However, if another funding institution imposes restrictions on the terms of valorization or exploitation of future IP resulting from the programme, this may raise an issue.

IF THE PROPOSAL IS SUCCESSFUL, WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS IN TERMS OF REPORTING? DO THE ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTING INCLUDE ALL THE PUBLICATIONS AND PATENT APPLICATIONS?

During the duration of the four-year programme, by January 31st , the PI is required to submit an annual administrative report to the FRFS-WEL-T. This report shall briefly set out, in particular:

- scientific publications;
- scientific honours and awards received;
- missions;
- personnel;
- patent applications and valorization opportunities;
- significant new sources of funding.

The administrative report shall include all publications and valorisation results produced by the PI during the reporting period.

By January 31st following the end of the four-year programme, the PI shall submit a final activity report covering the same elements as those listed above, together with a brief scientific report covering the four years of research funded by the FRFS-WEL-T.

IF SUCCESSFUL, HOW MANY VALORISATION MEETINGS ARE FORESEEN PER YEAR? DO REPORTING MEETINGS WITH WEL-T MEMBERS AND THE TTO COVER ALL PI PREPRINTS, INCLUDING THOSE RELATED TO OTHER ONGOING PROJECTS, OR ONLY THOSE RELATED TO THE WEL-T PROJECT?

The WELRI establishes, together with the PI, a schedule of valorization meetings. These meetings shall be held at least three times a year from the start of the research programme. The valorisation meetings shall focus exclusively on publications, preprints, results and

valorisation issues directly related to the WEL-T programme and shall not cover publications or results arising from other ongoing projects of the PI.
The agenda of the monitoring valorization meetings shall include, among others, the following items:

- presentation of the progress of the programme;
- schedule for the communication of the results, including presentations at conferences, submission of articles for publication, presentation of dissertations or theses, press releases and interviews, etc.,, in order to comply with the requirements necessary for the protection of intellectual property relating to the results;
- review of the results and valorization opportunities;
- recommendations concerning the protection of the results;
- outlook and future perspectives.

DOES THE FNRS FLEXIBILITY MEASURES APPLY TO THE FRFS-WEL-T PROGRAMME?

No. The flexibility measures applicable to standard FNRS projects (e.g. PDR, CDR, etc.) do not apply to the instruments of the Welbio and Wel-T strategic axes.

The following specific flexibility measures apply to the funded FRFS-WEL-T programmes:

- Transfers between budget categories (personnel, operating costs, equipment) require prior authorization from FRFS-WEL-T. The requests should be sent by email at credits-projets@frs-fnrs.be
- Transfers between budget subcategories are allowed freely and do not require prior authorization.
- Hiring personnel does not require prior authorization from FRFS-WEL-T.
- A deferral of up to six months of the employment of staff planned but not yet effective at the start date of the agreement is allowed.
- Changes in personnel must be notified to FRFS-WEL-T by email at credits-projets@frs-fnrs.be or reported in the annual report following the change.
- The four-year programme is covered by two distinct two-year research agreements.
- For each two-year agreement, grants may be carried forward to the following budgetary year. However, budgets may not be transferred from one two-year agreement to another.
- The total budget for years 3 and 4 is limited to the total amount granted for years 1 and 2.
- Any amounts not used at the end of a two-year research agreement revert to the FRFS for the WEL-T strategic axis.

DOES THE PANEL COVER ALL THE THEMES AND AREAS ADDRESSED BY THE CALL?

The panel is composed of specialists with broad research expertise, who base their assessment on reviews conducted by highly specialised experts for each individual proposal.

IS THE COMPOSITION OF THE PANEL PUBLICLY AVAILABLE?

Yes, it is available at the following link: https://www.frs-fnrs.be/docs/Reglement-et-documents/Commission_WEL-T_INVESTIGATOR_2026.pdf

For more information, please consult:

- **WEL-T INVESTIGATOR PROGRAMME 2026 REGULATIONS**
- **WEL-T INVESTIGATOR PROGRAMME 2026 MINI-GUIDE**
- **Applicants are also encouraged to consult the relevant services of their host institution, particularly for questions relating to personnel, budgeting and employment arrangements.**

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the F.R.S.-FNRS (credits-projets@frs-fnrs.be).