

# Call of SIBECOL Projects for Early Career Researchers - 2021

## 1. Background

The Iberian Society of Ecology (SIBECOL) brings together scientists and professionals from all areas of Ecology with the aim of placing Ecology at the centre of our society.

The aim of this project call is to support early career ecologists by: (i) providing them funding opportunities, (ii) fostering the collaboration among them, and (iii) promoting multi- and interdisciplinary research in Ecology.

To do so, SIBECOL opens a call for original projects in Ecology divided into two categories:

- A. Starting early career researchers project fellowship (Starting ECR) (One fellowship of 3000 €)
- B. Advanced early career researchers project fellowship (Advanced ECR) (One fellowship of 4000 €).

To be considered, proposals **must be led by at least two researchers and integrate the study of at least two different ecosystems** (terrestrial, freshwaters, marine). The project can focus on ecosystem interactions (terrestrial-freshwaters, terrestrial-marine, freshwater-marine), but also can be a comparative work where a similar question, process or pattern is examined in different ecosystems. We, therefore, encourage the participation and collaboration of early career researchers (ECRs) coming from different ecological disciplines (experimental, theoretical, modelling) or fields (biogeochemistry, community ecology, ethology, evolution, etc) to promote interdisciplinary beyond multidisciplinary.

## 2. Requirements of candidates and participants

### Candidates:

In order to apply for this call, all candidates, regardless of the category, must meet the following requirements:

1. They must be members of SIBECOL or any of its associated societies before submitting the project.
2. They must not be recipients of any previous project funded by SIBECOL or any of the associated societies.
3. They must apply for one project and category. Applicants cannot be principal investigators (PIs) of more than one project per call.

Further, the specific requirements to apply for each category are:

- A. **Starting ECR** - Be a master, doctoral or postdoctoral researcher (less than 3 years after PhD defence) before the publication of this call.
- B. **Advanced ECR** - Be a postdoctoral or a non-permanent researcher (more than 3 and less than 6 years after PhD defence) before the publication of this call.

Following European Commission recommendations, the periods set out above can be extended for maternity leave up to 18 months per child. For paternity, the extension will match the total time taken as parental leave by the applicant. Other circumstances that may justify extensions in the abovementioned periods are: (i) to be or have been responsible for children or any person in a situation of dependency; to have or have had a long-term illness

(sick leave longer than 6 months); to be recognized as refugee under the 1951 Refugee Convention. All the above-mentioned circumstances have to be properly documented during the application procedure. Applicants can contact the SIBECOL secretary in case of doubts about how to proceed.

### **Participants:**

SIBECOL projects want to promote the collaboration among ECRs and therefore opens the possibility to perform collaborative projects among various researchers (see Team assembly below). To participate in the research team of the selected projects, the participants must (i) be member of SIBECOL or any of its associated societies, and (ii) have the same or lower academic degree than the PIs (e.g. participants of Starting ECR should be a master, doctoral or postdoctoral researcher up to 3 years after PhD defence).

### **3. Project requirements, duration and team assembly**

All projects, independently of the category, must meet the following requirements:

1. They must combine the study of at least two different ecosystems (terrestrial, freshwaters, marine) and should promote interdisciplinarity.
2. They must have at least two PIs. They may or may not be from the same institution. PIs should also have complementary background or skills, yet this requirement is not mandatory. One of the PIs should be designated as the coordinator of the project. This person will be in charge of communicating with SIBECOL and managing the project funds.
3. The official time framework for the development of the project is 2 years. An additional year can be granted if any of the PIs meets during the project any of the conditions considered in the extension clauses in section 2, or if any other major cause affects the normal development of the project. The time framework includes field and lab work (in case of empirical projects), data analysis and dissemination of results of the project.
4. Projects must be carried out during the official time framework. SIBECOL will not fund any empirical project whose data has been already collected for that aim, or that aim to promote the results of ongoing projects.
5. They must not be funded by any other entity, nor be related to the research program of other funded projects.

### **Team assembly:**

Projects must have a minimum of two partners, but there is no maximum number of participants, so additional researchers can join the project as collaborators. In the case of opting for a more collaborative project, PIs have two options to create their research team. (i) They provide a list of participants (other ECRs they know and contact because of the complementary expertise with the project). In this case, this list will be submitted as an annex at the end of the application form. (ii) The PIs launch an open invitation for participation after the projects are granted. In this last scenario, the call for participation should explain both the aims of the project and the requirements and instructions which participants need to fulfil in order to apply for. This invitation would be disseminated by all the official media (email lists and social media) of SIBECOL and its associated societies.

Any researcher interested in joining any of the granted projects should write a letter expressing their interest, expertise in the subject and commitment and send it to the project PIs. The PIs will assemble their research teams based on scientific and inclusivity criteria. The exclusion of possible participants should be argued with the SIBECOL secretary.

#### 4. Budget

This SIBECOL call for ECR projects has a total available budget of 7,000 €, which is divided as follows:

A. **Starting ECR** - We will fund one project with a total budget of 3,000 €.

B. **Advanced ECR** - We will fund one project with a total budget of 4,000 €.

The budget could be supplemented by funds provided by the participants or their institutions. The budget may cover consumables, travel expenses required exclusively for the development of the project, conference registration fees and publication costs. Salaries and non-consumable materials cannot be paid by the budget. Eligible costs should be specified on the proposal according to the objectives of the project. The budget designated to attend meetings should prioritize the SIBECOL congress or any other conference organized by the associated societies.

The coordinator of each awarded project will receive 80% of the total budget at the beginning of the project. The remaining 20% of the budget will be received after the positive evaluation of the final report. SIBECOL will pay the corresponding IRPF taxes without detriment of the subsidized amount. The coordinator of each project must declare the income in the corresponding annual income tax declaration.

#### 5. Application procedure

Candidates interested in submitting a project proposal should complete the application form (available [here](#)) and send it by e-mail to the Secretary of SIBECOL (Andrea García Bravo, [secretariat@sibecol.org](mailto:secretariat@sibecol.org)) indicating "SIBECOL ECR-Projects" in the subject line. The project proposal should be submitted in English as a single file. It should contain information about the novelty of the project, the research objectives, the need for collaboration to achieve those goals, the methodology and work plan, the expected results and the justification of the budget (see project application form for detailed information about the sections and all necessary documents). The project proposal should not exceed 5 pages (not including bibliography or annexes) with Times New Roman font and 11-point size. The application must be accompanied by (i) the curriculum vitae of the PIs, (ii) the certificate of the PhD defence (if the applicants already hold the title), (iii) a letter testifying that the applicants will have the support from the host(s) institution(s) to carry out the project, and (IV) a list of participants (if necessary). All annexes should be merged at the end of the project application form. The period for submitting applications for the 2021 call is open from July 1<sup>st</sup> to September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021 (23:59 UTC + 1).

The CV format is free, but it should contain: academic path, list of publications (both published and in preparation) and projects (indicate whether the applicant was the coordinator or not). The existence of the necessary expertise to lead and perform the proposed project by PIs should be clearly justified. CVs should not be longer than four pages each.

The fact of applying for the present call for SIBECOL Projects for ECRs (2021) supposes (i) the acceptance by the applicants of its bases and its resolution, which could not be appealed, and (ii) the resignation of any type of claim. All principal investigators must sign a responsibility statement (at the end of the project application form), stating that all the abovementioned requirements are fulfilled.

## 6. Project Evaluation

After the deadline of the project submission, the proposals will be collated and sent to an Evaluation Panel. The panel will be constituted by five members. SIBECOL Committee Board will nominate four evaluators among renowned ecologists from different disciplines covered by each project. The selection of the Evaluation Panel will seek for gender balance and ensure no conflict of interest with any of the project proposals, nor candidates. A fifth member of the Evaluation Panel will be designated from SIBECOL Committee Board to supervise the evaluation process and ensure no incompatibilities between evaluators and projects.

The evaluation of proposals will follow the guidelines marked by the *San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment* (DORA; read guidelines [here](#)). The projects submitted will be reviewed by the panel and evaluated based on the following general and specific criteria.

### General criteria (yes or no query):

1. The scientific quality of the project (reasoning, objectives and hypotheses) is excellent. The development of the project will certainly contribute to improve the current understanding of Ecology.
2. The project is feasible considering methodology, working plan, timeline and requested budget.
3. The project integrates the study of two (or more) different ecosystems (terrestrial, freshwaters, marine).

### Specific criteria (score-based criteria)

1. Scientific merit, innovative nature, relevance and originality of the project (Max. 40 points).
2. The project is totally feasible considering: (i) the expertise of the PIs (based on their CVs); experimental design and methodology; and (ii) the organization of the project in terms of time, material and human resources. The likely availability of all necessary materials to carry out the different parts of the project (field work, laboratory analyses, etc.) will be considered (Max. 20 points).
3. Project multi- and interdisciplinarity. The project allows to establish new linkages across ecosystems (terrestrial, freshwater, marine). Raising synergies and the integration of different disciplines or fields will be positively evaluated (Max. 20 points).
4. The potential for enhancing interactions and networking among ECRs and inclusion of participants from differing geographical, cultural and gender identities (Max. 10 points).
5. CV evaluation of the PIs based only on scientific interest (considering all together publications, databases, software development, etc.) and not on journal-based

metrics, such as Journal Impact Factors. CV evaluation only applies for the Advanced ECR category (Max. 10 points).

### **Evaluation process:**

General and specific criteria will be used to evaluate the projects in three stages:

- Phase 1: Projects will be evaluated based on the general criteria. To pass to the second phase, projects must get a positive evaluation for every general criterion by at least three evaluators.
- Phase 2: Pre-selected projects will be evaluated based on the specific criteria. Evaluators will grade every criterion according to the abovementioned scores. Finally, the total score assigned to each project by all evaluators will be averaged.
- Phase 3: The project with the highest score of each modality will be selected and granted.

The decision of the panel will be announced not later than two months after the deadline of the project submission. An email will be sent to all applicants and the resolution will be published on SIBECOL's website and its official social media. All projects and applicants will receive an evaluation report addressing the criteria mentioned above. The decision from the panel is final.

## **7. Project development, outputs and commitments**

Once projects are granted, the PIs must confirm the final list of participants to the SIBECOL Secretary, who will confirm their membership to SIBECOL or any of its associated societies. The Committee Board of SIBECOL will review the progress of the projects and will ensure the projects are carried out following the proposals and the rules established in this call.

The deliverables of the projects are:

- A. A scientific report indicating the activities carried out and the results obtained (no longer than 5 pages). This report must be sent to SIBECOL by the end of the official time framework.
- B. An oral presentation with the (preliminary) results of the project in the SIBECOL meeting in 2022 or 2025.
- C. PIs should commit to publish one publication in a peer-review journal. This publication is not subjected to the official time framework of 2 years. It can occur any time afterwards.

All participants in the research will be considered as potential co-authors in the project outputs (except theses).

Besides, the coordinator of each awarded project must:

- Sign a letter of acceptance of the funding and associated responsibilities.
- Acknowledge SIBECOL funding in any deliverable, publication or outreach activity.
- Ensure project funds are used in accordance to what is specified in the proposal.
- Submit a final report about all expenses based on the awarded funding. The report must contain supporting documents for the payments (tickets, receipts or invoices).

Both the scientific and expenses report must be sent to the secretary of SIBECOL by July 2023. Once the final report is approved, SIBECOL will make the second and last corresponding payment 20% of the total.

## **8. Other regulations**

1. SIBECOL reserves the right to not grant any of the project categories, if: (i) there are no proposals for any of them; (ii) the submitted proposals do not reach the minimum level established by the evaluation criteria.
2. For a period of 48 months since projects are granted, SIBECOL reserves the right to (i) revoke any of them and (ii) to claim the reimbursement of the whole funding, if the infraction of any of the call rules is proved.