



SQUASH

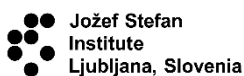
Slovenian Quantum Science Hub

postdoctoral program

PUBLIC INTERNATIONAL CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

1st call

(Deadline August 30, 2025, 17:00 CET)



Jožef Stefan
Institute
Ljubljana, Slovenia



Co-funded by
the European Union

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REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION,
SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

The program is co-funded by the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation of the Republic of Slovenia.

CONTENTS

1.	SUBJECT OF THE CALL	3
2.	WHY APPLY?.....	3
3.	WHO CAN APPLY?.....	4
4.	THE APPLICATION	4
	TIMELINE FOR THE CALL 1	5
5.	EMPLOYMENT DETAILS.....	5
6.	EVALUATION CRITERIA, CANDIDATE SELECTION AND REDRESS	5
7.	ENSURING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES	8
8.	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	8

SQUASH Fellowship Program

1st International Call for Postdoctoral Researchers

The SQUASH Program is a prestigious Marie Skłodowska-Curie COFUND initiative offering 3-year postdoctoral positions in quantum science and technology. This 1st international call invites outstanding researchers from around the world to join leading Slovenian and international institutions in shaping the future of quantum innovation.

1. SUBJECT OF THE CALL

The Jožef Stefan Institute is announcing a public call for participation in the SQUASH program – the Slovenian Quantum Science Hub. This is an innovative, intersectoral training and career-development program, co-funded by the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions program GA n. 101177446 and the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation of the Republic of Slovenia.

The aim of the SQUASH program is to enhance the research excellence and career opportunities of exceptional postdoctoral researchers from around the world. Selected candidates will have the opportunity to develop their research ideas in one of four areas of quantum science:

- Quantum Theory
- Quantum Materials
- Quantum Technology
- Quantum Computing and Information

The program, led by the Jožef Stefan Institute, includes collaboration with prominent associated partners from Slovenia, the EU, and beyond. It promotes career mobility and offers top-level training in scientific and transferable skills. Through Call 1, SQUASH aims to employ an initial 20 individuals for 3-year full-time postdoctoral contracts with competitive salaries, excellent research conditions, and international mobility. Call 2, planned for March 2026, will employ a further 20 postdoctoral researchers.

2. WHY APPLY?

The Slovenian Quantum Science Hub is an innovative, intersectoral program for training and career development. It is a highly competitive initiative offering researchers attractive conditions. The program will provide:

- 40, 3-year full-time employment contracts as a Marie Skłodowska-Curie COFUND fellow, with complete academic freedom to carry out your research project and a budget for research, training and travel,
- Opportunities for international and intersectoral mobility through secondments with prominent SQUASH partners from Slovenia, various parts of Europe, North America, India, and Japan,
- Strong links with industry through collaboration with SQUASH non-academic partners,
- High-quality courses on SQUASH research topics, supplemented by extensive soft-skills programs, including transferable-skills development.

SQUASH is a project aligned with the strategic priorities of both Slovenia and the European Union. It provides young researchers from diverse fields of quantum science—ranging from physics, chemistry,

and materials science to computing and engineering—a pathway to scientific maturity and independence.

Join us and develop your career in Slovenia, where science, innovation, and quality of life converge!

Read more: [Discover SQUASH](#)

3. WHO CAN APPLY?

To participate in the evaluation process, applicants must meet the following criteria by the application deadline:

- Hold a doctoral degree (or have successfully defended their dissertation, even if the degree is not yet formally awarded).
- Comply with the mobility rule, i.e., have not resided or carried out their main activities in Slovenia for more than 12 months within the last 3 years before the application deadline.
- Propose an independent postdoctoral research project aligned with one or more of the key research areas of the program.
- Applicants are encouraged to consult potential supervisors, who can guide the applicant through the application process.

Eligibility Summary

- PhD awarded (or thesis defended)
- Mobility rule: not in Slovenia >12 months in past 3 years
- Research proposal aligned with SQUASH themes

SQUASH promotes an inclusive, diverse, and supportive research environment, encouraging applications from underrepresented groups.

4. THE APPLICATION

Applications must be written in English and submitted via the online portal of the Jožef Stefan Institute for the SQUASH program before the application deadline: <https://join.squash.ijs.si/>

The portal requires each applicant to first register and then complete the following sections:

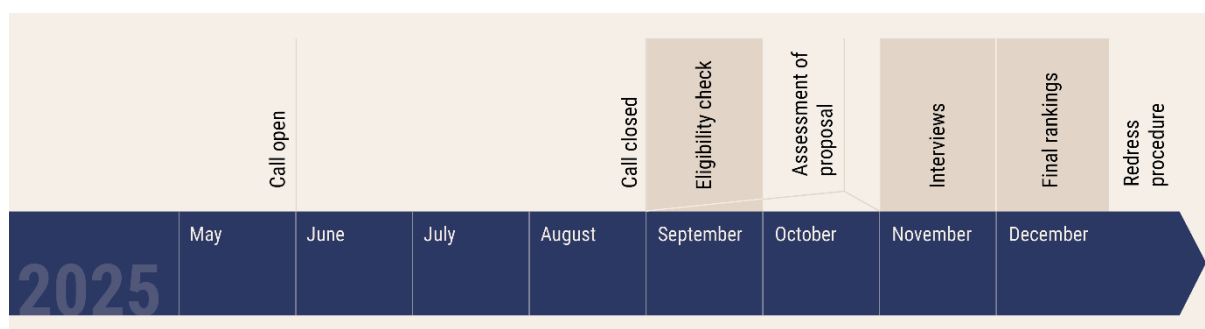
- Personal information
- Eligibility
- Academic profile
- Non-academic experience
- Details of participation in any communication, promotional, or dissemination activities (excluding scientific publications)
- Research field for which they are applying
- Ethics questionnaire

In addition, applicants must upload the following documents:

- **Europass CV** with standard academic and research information, including a complete list of publications: <https://europass.europa.eu/en/create-europass-cv>
- **Motivation letter**, based on a predefined set of questions, explaining the applicant's interest in the SQUASH program and the reasons for their application, including how they expect the program to enhance their career goals. You can find the template at: <https://squash.ijs.si/en/1st-call/>

- **Research proposal** (maximum 10 pages), addressing how the proposal aligns with one or more key research areas, as well as the objectives and purpose of the proposed project, the state of the art, originality and innovation of the proposal, research methodology, and expected outcomes. The proposal should also include a dissemination and communication plan, including an exploitation strategy if applicable. It must include a Gantt chart and financial plan, as well as requirements for work to be carried out during a mandatory secondment with one of the associated partners or at another location outside the project. The templates are available at: <https://squash.ijs.si/en/1st-call/>
- Completed **Ethics Self-Assessment** and also an **Ethics Statement** of not more than 2 pages, including a description of the nature of these issues and how they plan to deal with them, annexing the Ethics Statement to the Project Proposal. You can find the template at: <https://squash.ijs.si/en/1st-call/>
- **Recommendation letters** from two evaluators outside the SQUASH program, assessing the applicant's previous research activities, research abilities, and work experience. Applicants can also send recommendation letters via the website <https://academicjobsonline.org/>.

Timeline for the Call 1 - 2025



5. EMPLOYMENT DETAILS

1. Researchers will be employed under a standard 3-year fixed-term employment contract following national regulations. All legitimate statutory benefits under national regulations and host institution rules will apply, including working hours, flexible working time, paid annual leave, sick leave, parental leave, social security, pension insurance, and family allowances.
2. Researchers will receive a monthly gross salary of €5.600,00/€6.100,00 (with/without family allowance). This is gross¹ amount that includes all taxes and other statutory contributions. The researcher's net salary will be determined after deducting all mandatory social security contributions and direct taxes. The researcher will be contracted to work for 40 hours per week, with national (bank) holidays and approx. 25–30 personal free days (depending on previous working experience, social circumstances such as number of children, etc.) and fully paid maternity/paternity/parental leave. The institution will pay the salary in accordance with national legislation and established practice, providing equal working conditions, rights, and obligations as for other employees and researchers. Employment conditions will comply with the European Charter and Code for Researchers.

For more information, please refer to the Applicant's Guide at: <https://squash.ijs.si/en/1st-call/>

¹ Gross salary with employer's social contributions.

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA, CANDIDATE SELECTION AND REDRESS

6. 1. Selection Process: Transparent and Evaluation in 7 Stages

The SQUASH selection procedure ensures a fair, transparent, and merit-based recruitment of postdoctoral fellows. The process is aligned with the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and consists of the following **7 key stages**:

1. **Eligibility Check**
Immediately after the submission deadline, all applications are reviewed to ensure they meet formal eligibility requirements (e.g., PhD status, mobility rule, complete documents). Only eligible applications proceed to evaluation.
2. **Proposal Evaluation by Experts**
Eligible proposals are evaluated remotely by a **Proposal Evaluation Committee** consisting of international experts in the relevant scientific fields. Each application is reviewed by **three independent evaluators**.
3. **Consensus Score and Shortlisting**
A consensus score is reached from the individual assessments. Applications that score **8.0 or higher (out of 10)** are shortlisted for the next stage. Feedback reports are compiled for each applicant.
4. **Invitation to Interview**
The top 40 shortlisted candidates are invited to an **online interview**. Invitations are issued with clear instructions and evaluation guidelines for transparency and preparation.
5. **Interview Stage**
Candidates are assessed during a 40-minute recorded interview by an **Interview Evaluation Panel**. The evaluation focuses on the applicant's communication skills, motivation, project feasibility, and alignment with the program.
6. **Final Selection and Ranking**
Interview scores are combined with proposal scores using a weighted formula:
 - a. **70% written proposal score**
 - b. **30% interview score**
 Final rankings are compiled and presented to the **Governing Board**, which formally approves the list of selected fellows and a reserve list.
7. **Notification and Feedback**
All applicants are notified of the outcome. Rejected applicants receive an evaluation summary report. A **redress procedure** is in place to address possible procedural errors.

Equality between genders is guaranteed, and all forms of discrimination against individuals applying as young researchers are strictly prohibited.

Written Proposal Evaluation (70%)

Table 1.1a: Evaluation criteria applied to the applicant and the research proposal.

Proposal (50% weight of the total score)		
Excellence (25%)	Feasibility and Implementation (15%)	Impact & dissemination (10%)
Clarity of objectives; Originality of proposed research and awareness of current debates and state of the art	Comprehensive and appropriate theoretical and methodological framework; Feasibility within given timeframe and available budget; Relevance for the Key Research Areas; Fit with the host research groups of SQUASH; Capacity to carry out the research project	Recognition of anticipated impact of work; Evidence of long-term vision; Publication, dissemination and exploitation plan.
Applicant (50% weight of the total score)		
Track record (20%)	Competences and motivation (15%)	Career development (15%)
Qualifications; Research track-record; Awards & Funding; Statements of recommendation	Past achievements (quality and productivity), demonstrated collaborative aspects; Diversity of dissemination activities including conference attendance and organization, invited talks; Ability to forge beyond disciplinary specialisms	Relevance of fellowship at career stage; Scope for new partnerships and relevance of potential cross-sectoral collaboration

Interview Assessment (30%)

Applicants shortlisted from the written proposal evaluation stage will undergo a structured interview. Reviewers will grade candidates based on scientific competence, communication skills, and career potential.

Table 1.1 b: Evaluation criteria applied to the applicant in the interview.

Project (50% weight of the total score)	
Presentation (25%)	Discussion (25%)
Scientific background, technical capability	Self-evaluation (weaknesses and strengths), vision of a larger context
Researcher (50% weight of the total score)	
Expected career impact (25%)	Soft skills (25%)
Career path vision; Motivation; Entrepreneurial awareness	Teamworking, Communication skills, Outreach interests

6. 2. Redress

Any applicant who is rejected during the evaluation process has the right to submit an appeal under the following conditions:

- Scope of Redress: Appeals can only address procedural errors in the evaluation process. Disagreements with the scores or opinions of evaluators will not be considered valid grounds for appeal.
- Where to Appeal: Appeals must be submitted to the Executive Board of the SQUASH program. Contact: squash@ijs.si
- Time Limit: Appeals must be filed within 7 days of the applicant being informed of the rejection.
- Final Decision: If a procedural mistake is confirmed, the Governing Board will re-evaluate the application. The Governing Board's decision following the redress review is final and binding.

7. ENSURING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

SQUASH is committed to fostering an inclusive research environment. We welcome applications from all qualified candidates, regardless of gender identity, nationality, ethnic background, disability, age, or sexual orientation.

8. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The final deadline for submitting complete applications to the public call is **August 30, 2025, 17:00 CET**.

Only complete applications submitted in English through the online portal and received by the application deadline will be considered. Applications submitted before the call's publication date or after the specified deadline will not be considered.

For more information, please check Applicant Guide at: <https://squash.ijs.si/en/1st-call/>

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