

## **SPHERE AWARD for IDEAS in Citizen Science & Global Health**

### **1. Background, Objectives, and Scope of the award**

Funded through a UNITA Starting Grant, the SPHERE project promotes Citizen Science (CS) as an innovative approach to enhancing the quality and impact of research within the UNITA alliance. CS is a scientific methodology involving the voluntary participation of non-professional scientists in various phases of a collaborative research process, including project design, data collection, data analysis, and dissemination of results. CS has long been applied to disciplines such as ecology, biodiversity, or astronomy. More recently, it has also been introduced in the health sciences as a valuable approach for addressing complex health and societal challenges while strengthening the connection between academia and society. Within this framework, the One Health approach provides a valuable perspective by recognising the interconnections between human, animal, and environmental health, which are increasingly relevant to addressing contemporary Global Health challenges.

Through this award, SPHERE aims to support the development of CS ideas related to Global Health and the One Health approach. The award is intended to support the testing of innovative ideas and participatory approaches rather than the implementation of large-scale research projects. The objective is to encourage students and early-career researchers to test participatory methodologies and establish collaborations with citizens, communities, and stakeholders.

Proposed ideas may vary in scale and format, ranging from small local activities and engagement actions to more structured initiatives. Particular value will be given to actions that, despite their limited scale, demonstrate meaningful citizen participation, innovation, feasibility, and potential for future development.

By supporting these pilot experiences, the award seeks to foster interdisciplinary collaboration, strengthen links between academia and society, and generate practical examples of CS that can inspire future activities within the UNITA Alliance and beyond.

**2. Eligibility Criteria.** The mandatory eligibility requirements are the following:

- 2.1. Applicant Status. The proposal must be submitted by individuals affiliated with one of the universities members of the UNITA Alliance<sup>1</sup>, and belonging to one of the following categories: Bachelor's students, Master's students, single-cycle degree students, PhD students, fellows, Post-doctoral Fellows, medical and veterinary residents, as well as trainees in related One Health-related specialties.
- 2.2. Use of Citizen Science Methodologies applied to the Global Health topic. The proposed idea must clearly include Citizen Science methodologies in its design and implementation.
- 2.3. Involvement of a non-academic stakeholder. At least one non-academic stakeholder must be involved in the consortium or activities (i.e., NGOs, Associations, local authorities, Schools, Healthcare organizations, Citizen Associations, Companies, Social enterprises). A signed supporting letter from the non-academic stakeholder with a clear description of its role is mandatory.
- 2.4. Team composition. There is no limit to the size of the team. Teams may include participants from one or more universities of the UNITA Alliance (Members and Associates) and may combine different profiles and roles. Interdisciplinary and inter-institutional collaboration is strongly encouraged. In addition to the applicant, teams may include participants from GEMINAE partner institutions. As specified in Section 2.3, the involvement of at least one non-academic stakeholder is mandatory. Teams may also involve additional partners beyond the UNITA Alliance, including both academic and non-academic organisations, provided that their role and contribution to the idea are clearly described.
- 2.5. In order to comply with article 5.4 of the "UNITA Call for Starting Grants - Global Health", members of staff or students already participating in this or another Starting Grant as PIs, TLs or Members are not eligible as participants in this SPHERE Call.
- 2.6. Duration. The proposed idea must have a maximum duration of 12 months from the date of the award announcement, 21 of September 2026.

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<sup>1</sup> Universidade da Beira Interior · UBI (PORTUGAL); Instituto Politécnico da Guarda · IPG (PORTUGAL); Universidad Pública de Navarra · UPNA (SPAIN); Universidad de Zaragoza · UNIZAR (SPAIN); Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour · UPPA (FRANCE); Université Savoie Mont Blanc · USMB (FRANCE); Università di Torino · UNITO (ITALY); Università degli Studi di Brescia · UNIBS (ITALY); Universitatea de Vest din Timișoara · UVT (ROMANIA); Universitatea Transilvania din Brașov · UNITBV (ROMANIA)

**3. Evaluation procedure.** The evaluation process will consist of three steps.

**STEP 1: Eligibility Check.** The SPHERE team will verify compliance with the mandatory eligibility criteria described in Section 2.

**STEP 2: Preliminary Ranking Based on Bonus Criteria.** Eligible applications will receive additional bonus points according to the objective criteria described below. A preliminary ranking will be established by the SPHERE team on the basis of the bonus score. Up to 20 proposals-those with higher scores- will be shortlisted for the final evaluation phase.

**STEP 3: Final Evaluation.** The shortlisted proposals will be evaluated by a selection committee composed of external experts in citizen science and, where appropriate, experts with relevant knowledge of the proposal's thematic area. This composition is intended to ensure an impartial, interdisciplinary, and scientifically rigorous assessment process. The evaluation will consider both the scientific quality and the participatory dimensions of each idea, as well as its methodological soundness and potential contribution to citizen science.

**4. Evaluation and Selection Criteria.**

**4.1 Bonus Criteria.** Bonus points may be awarded for the following elements:

- Presence of a member belonging to a GEMINAE partner of the UNITA Alliance (<https://univ-unita.eu/it/geminae-partners/>). A simple individual letter of adherence to the idea can be provided.
  - 1 GEMINAE participant: +5
  - 2 or more GEMINAE participants: +10
- Involvement of other junior scientists (postdoctoral researchers, fellows, medical and veterinary residents, as well as trainees in related One Health-related specialties, fixed-term researchers) in the team, alongside the applicant.
  - 1 junior scientist: +5
  - 2 or more junior scientists: +10

- Involvement of additional partners extra UNITA Alliance (academic and/or non-academic) in the activities besides the mandatory non-academic stakeholder. Please provide a signed letter of adhesion.
  - 1 additional partner: +5
  - 2 or more additional partners: +10
- Ideas involving participants from two or more UNITA universities.
  - 2 UNITA universities: +5
  - 3 or more UNITA universities: +10
- Presence in the team of participants who are enrolled in the SPHERE synchronous course.
  - 1 participant: +5
  - 2 or more participants: +10

Maximum bonus score: 50 points.

4.2 Evaluation criteria. The evaluation will be based on the following criteria:

- Relevance of the idea and feasibility:  
 Relevance of the idea to Global Health - One Health topics, clarity of objectives, coherence of the proposed activities, and feasibility within the available timeframe and resources. Score 0-25
- Quality of Citizen Science approach, innovation and added value:  
 Effective integration of Citizen Science methodologies, level of citizen and stakeholder engagement, quality of the participatory process, soundness of the engagement strategy, and the extent to which the initiative provides added value within its specific context. Evaluation will consider the originality of the proposed approach, as well as its ability to build upon, connect with, or complement existing initiatives, communities, platforms, datasets, or resources, avoiding unnecessary duplication of efforts. Score 0-35
- Quality of the team and partnerships.  
 Quality and interdisciplinarity of the team composition, involvement of students, and external partners. Score 1-20
- Communication and dissemination:  
 Capacity of the team to promote activities and disseminate results to different audiences and communities, including the quality, coherence, and feasibility of the proposed use of the funding for communication and promotional materials. Score 1-20.

Maximum score: 100 points.

## 5. Award and Communication Support

The selected idea will receive an award consisting of a communication and dissemination support package provided by the University of Turin within the framework of the SPHERE Project.

This support package award consists in communication, dissemination, and promotional materials and services aimed at increasing the visibility and impact of the selected initiative.

**No money transfer is allowed.** All communication and dissemination activities supported by this award will be directly managed and procured by the University of Turin in accordance with the communication needs identified by the selected applicant, subject to the availability of resources (up to 1,100.00 Euro).

Examples of support that may be provided include:

- Visual identity and graphic design services;
- Postcards, posters, flyers, and other printed materials (A4 and A3);
- Roll-up banners;
- Promotional gadgets

To support applicants in planning their budgets, an indicative list of promotional materials and their estimated costs will be provided with the award documentation. This list is intended only as a reference tool to help applicants prepare a realistic and coherent dissemination budget within the maximum available funding of EUR 1,100.

Applicants are required to include in their proposal a brief **communication and dissemination plan** describing:

- The target audiences of the initiative;
- The expected communication and dissemination activities;
- The communication materials or services that could support the visibility of the initiative;
- An indicative estimate of the related communication costs.

**6. Proposal Structure and Submission.** Applications must be submitted in English and should not exceed 3 pages (excluding annexes, if any). The proposal should include:

1. Idea title
2. Applicants and affiliations and Stakeholders and partners involved (with specification of their role)
3. Idea description
4. Description of the Citizen Science approach and methodologies
5. Communication, Dissemination and Expected Impact

## 7. Timeline.

What	Date
Launch of the award call	22 June 2026
Submission deadline	20 July 2026
Evaluation period	21 July - 20 September 2026
Announcement of results	21 September 2026
Award ceremony and in-person workshop	30/31 October in Turin (Italy) during the SPHERE Final Workshop on Citizen Science and Global Health
Final deadline for ordering all communication and dissemination materials	10 December 2026

The winning team leader will be invited to participate in the SPHERE Final Workshop on Citizen Science and Global Health, taking place in Turin, Italy, on 30-31 October 2026, where the award ceremony will be held. Travel, accommodation, and meal expenses for the winning team leader will be covered by the SPHERE project.

**8. How to apply:** <https://datacloud.univ-unita.eu/index.php/apps/forms/s/3wJZFc63FPBeWyimW48erZRQ>

**9. Contacts:** Camelia Trandafir, Public University of Navarre. Email: [camelia@unavarra.es](mailto:camelia@unavarra.es)