

PSL University – Major Research Programs

TERRAE – Transition Environnementale par la Recherche, la Recherche-Action et l'Enseignement

Third Call for Projects « TERRAE ECLAIREURS »

Opening October 13, 2026

Deadline for submission: February 24, 2027 at 11:59 pm CEST.

Results April 28, 2027.

It is widely recognized that transition pathways toward a more environmentally and socially resilient world are urgently needed. The TERRAE program specifically aims to consolidate, amplify and structure research at PSL for the design and implementation of social and ecological transition pathways, relying on all the research sectors within PSL

This is a call for transdisciplinary research proposals on the design and implementation of social and ecological transition pathways to advance the TERRAE program objectives. The selected projects will receive up to 130,000 euros to support one or more of the following within budget constraints: a doctoral student (three-year scholarship), a fourth-year PhD student, a research assistant, or a postdoctoral scientist. The funding may also cover mobility and dissemination of results (visits to research collaborators and stakeholders, fieldwork, participation in conferences, publication, and community engagement). Selected projects will be involved in TERRAE's crossing seminars organised by TERRAE community.

Hereafter we provide information regarding 1. The TERRAE program objectives; 2. Application eligibility; 3. Proposal preparation; 4. Proposal submission; 5. Proposal evaluation and selection; 6. Post-award process; 7. Inquiries.

1. OVERVIEW OF THE TERRAE PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The five PSL institutions supporting TERRAE, with a community of more than 200 researchers, offer a platform to address the pressing challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, resources management, fair transition, social equity, and related issues. Achieving meaningful impact requires a systemic understanding of transition challenges, given the complex interconnections among societal, natural, and physical systems. This is necessary to avoid incomplete solutions that might even lead to unintended negative consequences. This requires understanding the constraints, interactions, and feedback loops between system components. Time is also of the essence, as the transition must be viewed as a dynamic trajectory with various patterns and effects, such as resilience, robustness, tipping points, and sensitivity to parameters and initial conditions. Both interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity are essential for this research. Transdisciplinarity is particularly critical, as sustained engagement and dialogue with transition stakeholders significantly increase the likelihood of research making a strong impact.

Given the need for a systemic approach to transitions and a rapid implementation of transition strategies, TERRAE seeks to:

- (Goal 1) Connect and coordinate research groups across PSL University that focus on environmental processes, global change and transition solutions, with the aim of uniting diverse disciplinary backgrounds.
- (Goal 2) Foster strong-impact, transition-oriented research accelerating the social and ecological transition, TERRAE intends to promote research that has a strong impact on society and the environment.
- (Goal 3) Engage non-academic stakeholders from the outset of each project to serve as a source of research questions and challenges and to act as partners and advocates in implementation and dissemination.

2. APPLICATION ELIGIBILITY

A TERRAE “Eclaireur Project” proposal must be developed and led by at least two co-Principal Investigators (co-PIs): one academic co-PI who is, or will be at the project start date, affiliated with a PSL-affiliated laboratory, and one (or more) non-academic stakeholder co-PI who will be closely involved in the design and implementation of the project. If funding is requested to support a doctoral student, the academic co-PI must be certified for doctoral supervision (HDR).

The involvement of additional academic partners from other disciplines and/or PSL institutions is strongly encouraged, in line with TERRAE's ambition to foster interdisciplinary research and new collaborations across PSL.

A co-PI, whether academic or stakeholder, may not be involved in more than one application. If the project involves personnel hiring, applicants do not need to be identified at the time of proposal submission. To facilitate the development of proposals for this third call for Eclaireur projects, TERRAE may, upon request, share applicants' collaboration needs with the TERRAE community.

3. GUIDELINES FOR PROPOSAL PREPARATION

The proposal can be written in French or English. The 150-word summary will be provided both in French and English.

There is a strict 5-page limit, excluding the title page(s), the list of bibliographical references, and the biosketches for each academic co-PI and for each non-academic stakeholder co-PI, and the letter of intent.

The proposal must consist of the following parts:

Title page – This part is not included in the 5-page limit. It should provide the following:

Project title

Project acronym

For each academic co-PI	For each non-academic stakeholder co-PI
Last name, First name Title and employer Host institution HDR (yes/no) Laboratory (full name, acronym, code, postal address) CNU section (number and full name) Up to five keywords describing expertise Email	Last name, First name Employer Title / Function Postal address Up to five keywords describing expertise Email

Project summary. Provide a French version and an English version, each with a 150-word limit.

Background and proposed research. Explain what aspects of the transition the Eclaireur project addresses and how the project was developed collectively by the PIs in a transdisciplinary approach. Summarize the state of the art and explain the specific goals of the project and why it would substantially advance the transition.

Methods and Milestones. Explain the main steps and methods to be used to achieve the goals of the project. Describe how the transdisciplinary approach will be implemented throughout the project, including how academic and non-academic partners will contribute to the research process. What are the expected deliverables? Highlight the academic and actionable deliverables. Include a timetable. Provide sufficient information on other potential sources of funding to document the feasibility of the proposed research. If the project raises ethical issues or requires special permitting, please describe them and how they will be addressed.

Presentation of the team (academic and non-academic). Explain the role of each team member in the project, how their respective expertise and experience complement each other, and in particular, how academic partners and stakeholders will work together towards the common project's goals. Explain the role of the hired scientist or staff (if any) to be funded by the project, and how they will interact with the PIs. Explain how the research products will eventually be used by the stakeholder. Document the scientific merit of the academic team members as well as the past achievements and ambitions of the stakeholders in transition research and action. Is there a history of collaboration between the team members? If so, please include indicators of collaborative success.

Budget and budget justification (130 000 euros max). Indicate in a table the amounts requested in terms of personnel (salary of a PhD student or post-doctoral scientist or engineer), operating costs and services, and describe the associated objectives.

Bibliographical references – This part is not included in the 5-page limit.

Biosketches – This part is not included in the 5-page limit. Please include a 2-page max biosketch for each co-PI, including: current title and position, professional preparation, past and current appointments, list of up to 5 publications most relevant to this project, list of up to 5 other publications, list of up to 5 synergistic activities. For each non-academic stakeholder co-PI, provide a short portfolio describing activities or productions most relevant to the project.

4. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

The proposal must be submitted as one single PDF file named “TERRAE-Eclaireur-Tertio-acronym” and sent to blandine.lathuilliere@ens.psl.eu by February 24, 2027 at 11:59 PM CEST.

5. PROPOSAL EVALUATION AND SELECTION

Proposals will be evaluated and ranked by the TERRAE Steering Committee, advised by external experts as needed, based on the following criteria:

- Relevance of the project topic to the three main goals of TERRAE. Particular attention will be given to projects that broaden the scope of disciplines and collaborations, or develop innovative and transformative action-research approaches.
- Scientific quality, originality, and feasibility of the project.
- Scientific merit of the team members and potential for new interdisciplinary synergies and new synergies between academic partners and stakeholders.
- Capacity of the research to translate into action that will speed up the transition.
- Feasibility of the project in relation to the requested budget, i.e. financial adequacy.

Award decisions will be announced by April 28, 2027 and PIs will be notified individually.

6. POST-AWARD PROCESS

Project start-up date: between September and December 2027.

Selected projects involving the recruitment of a doctoral student will be funded for three years. Selected projects involving the recruitment of a postdoctoral scientist will be preferentially funded for two years.

Selected teams will have to follow hiring procedures of the host institution. If a doctoral student is recruited, the student must start their doctoral contract in Fall 2027.

Selected projects must participate in the annual TERRAE conference to report on their progress as well as in TERRAE topical workshops.

In the middle and/or the end of the funding period, co-PIs will prepare a written report of the project achievements. The steering committee will provide guidelines for the preparation of the reports so that this work will not be too time-consuming.

All the available relevant elements must be transmitted to the TERRAE's Steering Committee (CoPil). The report will review the strategic elements of the project design and implementation, the co-production of the research between academic partners and stakeholders, and what plans have been developed to amplify the research and its impact for transition solutions.

7. INQUIRIES

Inquiries regarding this call should be directed to Blandine LATHUILLIÈRE :

blandine.lathuilliere@ens.psl.eu

(CERES, 45 rue d'Ulm, 75005 Paris).

More information on the TERRAE program is available on TERRAE website and will be updated regularly, particularly if needed to facilitate the identification of potential partners.

<https://terrae.psl.eu/>