

# FRONTIERS

science journalism initiative

## Residency program guide





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## 1. Executive Summary

The FRONTIERS project offers 3 to 5-month fellowships to global science journalists from 2023 to 2027. Its core goal is to advance independent science journalism by honing journalists' skills in communicating intricate scientific concepts effectively.

FRONTIERS focuses on empowering science journalists to bridge the knowledge gap between science and the public. By nurturing independent reporting, it aims to enhance public trust in scientific information, benefiting journalism, public understanding of science, and informed policymaking.

The program provides immersive fellowships for journalists to explore frontier research at European institutions. Emphasizing independence, it allows journalists to propose and pursue their reporting projects, participate in training, and network across institutions.

Open to journalists worldwide, the program requires applicants to secure a host institution and submit comprehensive project proposals, work samples, and recommendation letters.

A rigorous evaluation process examines project quality, journalist credentials, and potential societal impacts. Diversity, gender balance, geographical representation, and scientific areas are key considerations in selecting candidates.

The program's Coordination and Support Office aids applicants and institutions throughout the application and residency, while the Advisory Board ensures journalistic integrity and oversees evaluations. Journalists and host institutions have defined rights and responsibilities, fostering collaboration, independence, and active participation in program activities.

FRONTIERS is committed to advancing excellence in science journalism by offering immersive experiences for journalists at research institutions in the European Union or Associated countries. Its structured approach, stringent evaluation criteria, and dedication to journalistic integrity promise a diverse and impactful residency experience.

## 2. Introduction

FRONTIERS is the science journalism initiative funded by the European Research Council that offers grants for journalists from all over the world seeking to develop their professional skills in covering complex scientific topics by spending 3 to 5 months in residence in a European research institution performing frontier research in any discipline, including social sciences and humanities.

The FRONTIERS project is scheduled to run from 2023 to 2027. Throughout this period, up to 40 science journalists will have the opportunity to spend time with research teams and pursue their own reporting ideas, in total independence, at an institution of their choice.

FRONTIERS journalists in residence primarily focus on 'Frontier research' and engage with inquiries that reside at the cutting edge of available knowledge. Often characterized as high-risk/high-reward endeavors, 'Frontier research' may be complex to elucidate and particularly challenging to present to the public in a balanced and responsible way.

The Residency program guide provides essential information and resources for preparing a successful application.

In between calls, this guide may be updated based on the valuable feedback and insights provided by project participants all along the project duration.

Contributions from participants will help reshape and refine this guide, ensuring that it remains a living document that evolves alongside this collective journey. Suggestions for improvement can be sent to the FRONTIERS contact point at [support@frontiersmedia.eu](mailto:support@frontiersmedia.eu).

*The updated version of this guide will be available on the FRONTIERS website (<https://frontiers.media>).*

### 3. Program's main objectives

In its commitment to supporting independent science journalism, FRONTIERS aspires to play a pivotal role in supporting the professional development of science journalists.

This is of paramount importance in Europe, serving as a crucial bridge between the scientific community and the broader public. In a rapidly evolving world where science and technology play an ever-increasing role in our daily lives, the role of independent science journalists is more vital than ever. Their ability to accurately interpret and communicate complex scientific findings is essential in fostering a well-informed public, capable of making informed decisions about personal choices and scientific policies.

In Europe, with its rich diversity of cultures and languages, the challenge for science journalists is even greater. They must not only stay abreast of the latest scientific developments but also be adept at tailoring this information to a varied audience. Professional development opportunities, such as the FRONTIERS project, enable journalists to hone their skills in critical thinking, clear communication, and ethical reporting.

Moreover, as misinformation and disinformation become increasingly prevalent and some important scientific topics - including social sciences and humanities - do not reach the wider audience of citizens, the role of trained and independent science journalists is invaluable. They are instrumental in building public trust in scientific institutions and in the scientific method itself. By investing in their professional growth, Europe ensures that its citizens have access to reliable and accurate scientific reporting, which is essential for a resilient, healthy and democratic society. This investment not only benefits the field of journalism but also enhances public understanding and engagement with science, ultimately contributing to more informed policymaking and a more scientifically literate society.

## 4. What we offer

The FRONTIERS project offers fellowship residencies to journalists interested in spending 3 to 5 months in one or more European research institutions to increase their knowledge in a specific 'Frontier research' field of science or to carry out research for their own production (science journalism projects, books, or any other professional goal), in a totally independent way.

The FRONTIERS' bottom-up approach allows journalists to apply for residencies in any European research institution covering any field of frontier science, including social sciences and humanities. Within the 3-5 months of the residency, journalists can ask to spend shorter periods of time in one or more other research institutions to further enrich their experience and improve their knowledge in the selected field of frontier research.

During the project, training and networking activities will be developed, connecting stakeholders, disseminating good practices in science journalism, and creating bridges between journalists, researchers, and institutions. Selected fellows are expected to take part in these activities, before, during and after their residency.

The program design ensures the value of the initiative for both the research institution and the journalist while maintaining the journalists' independence and credibility.

## 5. Eligibility criteria

### 5.1 Journalists

*5.1.1 Nationality/Country of residence:* while primarily targeting residents in Europe and associated countries, the FRONTIERS program will also consider applications from science journalists of all nationalities residing elsewhere, who are willing to spend time in European research institutions and better understand the European scientific landscape.

*5.1.2 Professional criteria:* eligible participants include science journalists, defined as reporters, writers, editors, producers, illustrators, filmmakers, and photojournalists working across various media, including self-managed social media channels so long as they produce independent journalistic content. Journalistic content can have any format, from voice to video, texts and pictures as mixed formats. The FRONTIERS consortium and Advisory Board are aware that in some contexts the boundaries between science journalism and science communication are not always clearly defined and will not rule out applications by candidates with mixed profiles and careers, provided that at the time of the application they are recognised as journalists in their professional context.

*5.1.3 Commitment:* during the residency, selected applicants are expected to focus fully on their project, and to refrain from outside professional work. Applicants who are selected to become fellows are expected to actively participate in training and networking activities organized within the FRONTIERS project framework, and to take part in communication and dissemination activities (such as participation in a short video about their experiences during the residencies, and takeover of social media accounts for a short period of time). They are also expected to provide feedback on the residency as requested by the FRONTIERS staff, during and after the residency.

*5.1.4 Multiple applications:* journalists may submit a single application per call. Should more than one application exist, only the first one to be submitted will be considered. Applicants who have not been selected in one call may apply again in the next call. Science journalists selected for a residency will not be allowed to apply again, even if they are for some reason unable to complete the residency.

*5.1.5 Seniority/career level:* FRONTIERS grants differentiate among three levels of career, based on the professional seniority (see Scholarship and taxation section below):

- **early-career:** up to 5 years of professional experience;
- **mid-career:** 6-9 years of experience;
- **established:** ten or more years of experience.



**5.1.6: Resolution of controversies:** fellows are also expected to report immediately to the FRONTIERS team ([support@frontiersmedia.eu](mailto:support@frontiersmedia.eu)) all controversies that should arise with the host institution during or after the residency.

For any questions or further details, contact the FRONTIERS Coordination and Support Office via e-mail ([support@frontiersmedia.eu](mailto:support@frontiersmedia.eu)).

## 5.2 Host institutions

**5.2.1 Premise:** host institutions may support more than one journalist's application in the same call. However, since diversity of host institutions will be encouraged, it is unlikely that one host institution will host two FRONTIERS fellows. Host institutions will be able to host more than one fellow selected in different calls.

**5.2.2 Location:** host institutions should be a legal entity based in the EU Member State or in a country associated with the EU's Horizon Europe Programme by the call deadline.

**5.2.3 Focus:** institutions must host one or more research groups who are performing, or have performed in the past, frontier research in any field. Hosting current or past ERC grantees is a plus but is not required.

**5.2.4 Requirements:** host institutions have to commit in writing to fulfill the basic requirements listed below, in order to help science journalists in residence have a fruitful and enriching experience in carrying out their project in total independence, in a welcoming and safe working environment. Basic requirements include:

1. Badge or other forms of credentials granting access to the relevant premises;
2. Access to the cafeteria/canteen and other shared areas under the same condition as research staff;
3. A working space with access to wi-fi;
4. Access to the institution's library and electronic resources (such as books, scientific journals and databases);
5. Access to all events and activities organized for the institution's staff.

**5.2.5 Contribution:** host institutions are expected to support to the best of their possibilities the science journalist in residence before and during the residency, and to discuss with them all possible ways to organize lectures, seminars, workshops, round tables on science journalism and science communication for the institution's staff or for the wider public.

**5.2.6 Independence:** host institutions are required to respect and cherish the independence of the science journalist in residence. Science journalists in

residence are not expected to and will not provide any support for institutional communication, and are not expected to provide coverage of the host institution's activities, neither during nor after the residency, except for fulfilling their project and their own goals.

*5.2.7 Multiple applications:* host institutions are allowed to support more than one application in each call, but must inform candidates about concurrent applications, warning them that only one fellowship can be awarded to each institution in each call. Institutions that have hosted a science journalist in residence are allowed to support one or more applications in the following calls, knowing that the evaluation process is inspired by inclusion and balance, and will give priority to institutions that have not participated yet.

*5.2.8 Management:* the host institution will identify a 'FRONTIERS manager', who will be responsible for the management of all aspects of the residency. The FRONTIERS manager could be the scientist hosting the journalist, his/her laboratory or department head, a person from the communication office, etc. The FRONTIERS manager can be supported by a Deputy FRONTIERS manager.

*5.2.9 Feedback:* the FRONTIERS manager identified by the host institution is expected to provide feedback on the residency as requested by the FRONTIERS staff, during and after the residency, via e-mail, phone and/or other communication tools.

*5.2.10 Resolution of controversies:* host institutions are expected to report immediately to the FRONTIERS team ([support@frontiersmedia.eu](mailto:support@frontiersmedia.eu)) all controversies that should arise with the science journalist in residence during or after the residency.

For any questions or further details, contact the FRONTIERS Coordination and Support Office via e-mail ([support@frontiersmedia.eu](mailto:support@frontiersmedia.eu)).

## 6. Role of the FRONTIERS Coordination and Support Office (CSO)

The FRONTIERS consortium supports both science journalists and host institutions with a centralized Coordination and Support Office (CSO) both in preparing the application itself and in managing possible controversies during and after the fellowships.

### **The duties of the CSO include:**

- 6.1 the development and maintenance of a database of possible host institutions and researchers, listing the institutions that already expressed their interest in being included. The institutions will be included in the database if they submit their request via the online form on the website <https://frontiers.media/>;
- 6.2 the matchmaking service for journalists who are searching for a suitable research institution that fits with the goal of their project, if they are unable to find one on their own;
- 6.3 the support to the fellows, the hosting researchers and the host institution.

## 7. Role of the Advisory Board

The FRONTIERS Advisory Board plays a pivotal role in ensuring the integrity and independence of journalistic practices within these settings.

This board, composed of experts from both the journalistic and scientific communities, contributes to establishing clear guidelines and protocols that safeguard the journalists from any undue influence or pressure from their host institutions. By doing so, they preserve the essential objectivity and critical perspective that journalists bring to the reporting of scientific endeavors.

Furthermore, the Advisory Board is responsible for overseeing a rigorous and fair evaluation process for selecting journalist candidates. This process involves assessing each candidate's journalistic credentials, commitment to unbiased reporting, and ability to effectively communicate complex scientific concepts to the public.

Through these responsibilities, the Advisory Board ensures that the fellowship program not only fosters a rich exchange between journalism and science but also upholds the highest standards of journalistic independence and excellence.

The composition of the Advisory Board is available at:

<https://frontiers.media/about/advisory-board>.

## 8. How to apply

Journalists wishing to apply for a FRONTIERS fellowship must identify and contact an eligible research institution that is willing to host them and to accept the terms described in this guide. To initiate the application procedure, potential applicants should find the application form available in the FRONTIERS website and provide the required information, uploading all necessary documentation, which includes the proposed project for their residency.

Applicants who have not yet identified a host institution or researcher can search the database of potential host institutions available on the FRONTIERS website and explore possible matches by contacting the provided contact points at the chosen institution, or the FRONTIERS support office, that will provide assistance.

Note that only applications that fulfill all specified criteria and include the required documentation will be considered for further evaluation.

The FRONTIERS team is available to provide support and guidance for the application process. Please feel free to contact us at [support@frontiersmedia.eu](mailto:support@frontiersmedia.eu) for any questions related to this topic.

## 9. Structure of the application form

- Applicant Journalist Name
- Applicant Journalist Nationality
- Applicant Journalist E-mail
- Applicant Journalist Phone Number
- Career level application (early career, mid-career, established) - *Please see point 5.1.5 to determine the level of your application.*
- Host institution Name
- Host institution Country
- Name of FRONTIERS Manager at Host Institution
- E-mail of FRONTIERS Manager at Host Institution
- Scientific Domain (Physical Sciences and Engineering, Life Sciences, Social Sciences and Humanities, Multidisciplinary)
- Support documents (upload):
  - A. *Residency project proposal*: a PDF file detailing the project to be developed during the residency in the host institution.
  - B. *Work samples*: in a single PDF file, provide up to 10 relevant work samples from the last two years. Choose samples that best illustrate your interest and abilities. For audio and video samples, you may provide links, ensuring they are open. Please include a translation for any work not produced in English.
  - C. *Recommendation letter(s)*: in a single PDF, provide up to 3 recommendation letters by people familiar with your work.
  - D. *Commitment letter by the science journalist*: provide a commitment letter, based on the template available in this guide, signed by the applicant journalist (see Appendix I).
  - E. *Commitment letter by the host institution*: provide a commitment letter, based on the template available in this guide, signed by a representative on the letterhead of the candidate host institution (see Appendix II).

## 10. Structure of the Journalist's project

The project proposal presented by the applicant journalist should have the following structure, in this order:

- 10.1** CV of the applicant in narrative form highlighting the professional career, scientific background, spoken languages, personal interests, and any other detail the applicant considers important for a successful application (up to 500 words).
- 10.2** Details on the host institution, the hosting researcher, and the contact person in the institution.
- 10.3 Letter of intent:** the applicant should describe in 300 words maximum why he/she/they are applying to the FRONTIERS program.
- 10.4 Project description (up to 500 words):** this section should include the topic(s) of interest; a description of the activities that will take place during the fellowship (active participation in the lab life, journal clubs, etc; interviews; personal research; attendance/organization of courses at the host institution etc).
- 10.5 Impact (up to 200 words):** expected impact of the project on the journalist's career; expected societal impact of the residency (related to the topic, to the involved stakeholders, etc).
- 10.6 Dissemination** (*not mandatory*): if the journalist is planning to produce books, videos, articles, social media posts, documentaries, long-form, story series, multimedia, audio, installation etc, the dissemination section of the proposal (up to 200 words) will be considered by the evaluation committee.
- 10.7 Budget:** a tentative budget of the project, including life expenses, will help the committee to provide a reasonable economic support for the selected applicants, within the limits described in section 14. Scholarship and taxation below.

## 11. Evaluation procedure

Within the framework of the FRONTIERS project, the selection procedure relies on several key criteria, each of which plays a pivotal role in determining successful applicants. These criteria encompass the quality of the project, the strength of the candidate's resume, the expected impact of the project, ensuring no more than one journalist per host institution in each call, striving for diversity in residency in terms of gender, nationality, and geographical distribution, and giving priority to applicants who have already established strong connections with scientists and their institutions.

Applications compete with other applications within the same career stage category, meaning that early-career journalists will not be competing with experienced or established journalists.

The FRONTIERS project promotes equality and fairness principles. In order to have reasonably equal participation in terms of gender (journalists and scientists), geographical distribution across Europe and scientific areas covered by the residency program, the selection procedure is designed to include two steps.

### 11.1 Step 1 of the evaluation

Step 1 of the evaluation ranks all applications based on the criteria listed below. All the applications that have received a positive evaluation pass on to the second step.

#### 11.1.1 Evaluation criteria for Step 1

The evaluation criteria focus on the excellence and potential impact of the applications in the following dimensions, as presented in the project submitted by the applicant:

##### *11.1.1.1 Residency criteria (max 40 points)*

11.1.1.1.a. Objectives and scope (up to 10 points)

11.1.1.1.b. Foreseen contribution to:

11.1.1.1.b1. The diffusion of research results (up to 10 points)

11.1.1.1.b2. The journalists' career (up to 10 points)

11.1.1.1.b3. Increasing trust in science journalism and in science (up to 10 points)



### 11.1.1.2 Journalist criteria (max 40 points)

#### 11.1.1.2.a Journalist's track record

11.1.1.2.a1 Expertise and experience and their relevance to the field to be covered in the project (up to 10 points)

11.1.1.2.a2 Journalistic publications: stories for reporters/writers or role in journalistic projects for producers/editors (up to 10 points)

11.1.1.2.a3 Commitment to journalism, in terms of involvement in networking and mutual support with other science journalists, nationally and internationally (up to 10 points)

11.1.1.2.a4 Previous participation in science journalism events (professional conferences, festivals, workshops) (up to 5 points)

11.1.1.2.a5 Previous interactions with researchers (such as in-depth interviews, periods spent in research facilities, and living with researchers) (up to 5 points)

### 11.1.1.3 Research criteria (max 20 points)

#### 11.1.1.3.a Frontier science

11.1.1.3.a1 Groundbreaking and cutting-edge research work (up to 10 points)

11.1.1.3.a2 Value for society (up to 10 points)

## 11.2 Step 2 of the evaluation

Step 2 of the evaluation then proceeds to compose a balanced list of up to ten candidates, starting from the top-scoring applications, with a final composition of candidates equally distributed between young, experienced and established journalists, and in terms of gender (journalists and scientists), geographical distribution and scientific areas covered by the residency program.

The 10 pre-selected candidates will be invited to receive financial support. Should one or more of the pre-selected candidates waive the support, the selection committee will try to identify an applicant suitable for integrating the respective list while preserving as much as possible the balance.

## 12. Evaluation and selection committee

The evaluation and selection are managed by a committee composed of 3 members of the Advisory Board, that will rotate among the different calls, and one representative of each of the four FRONTIERS partners. Committee members will be invited to disclose all potential conflicts of interest that should arise, and the committee as a whole will deal with them appropriately.

## 13. Contacts

Applicants must provide an e-mail address and a phone number through which they can be contacted (if needed) both by the FRONTIERS team and the FRONTIERS manager at the host institution.

The FRONTIERS team will be available to answer questions related to different issues:

*13.1 administrative (e.g., payments, unexpected costs, etc.):*

support@frontiersmedia.eu

*13.2 logistics (e.g., lack of access, working conditions, etc):*

support@frontiersmedia.eu

*13.3 educational/training (e.g., attendance to courses, etc):*

support@frontiersmedia.eu

*13.4 reporting controversies (e.g., disagreements on the scope of the residency):*

support@frontiersmedia.eu

## 14. Scholarship and taxation

Selected fellows will be entitled to receive a monthly payment covering travel, accommodation, any potential taxation (applied on the individual and/or the institution) and eligible daily expenses up to 4,000 EUR (early-career) 5,000 EUR (mid-career), or 6,000 EUR (established), based on EU rules.

These grants are final and will not be increased under any circumstances.

## 15. Rights and duties

### 15.1 Rights and duties of the journalist in residence

For prospective participants in the FRONTIERS project, a set of rights and duties are in place to guide their involvement. These criteria include being an active journalist and committing to reside in close proximity to the host institution throughout the entire residency period. It is essential to spend time at the host institution as planned in the project, actively engage with researchers and other professionals at the institution and participate in various social and cultural events organized by the host institution.

FRONTIERS fellows should be prepared to participate in training sessions organized by the FRONTIERS project and collaborate with the host institution(s) on activities that promote discussion on topics related to science and the media, such as seminars, workshops, and round table discussions.

FRONTIERS fellows are expected to work alongside the consortium in raising awareness on frontier science and independent science journalism, while helping to spread the word about the FRONTIERS residencies among science journalists. The collaboration may include sharing testimonies or pictures to be used on FRONTIERS communication channels. Fellows will also be invited to take over one of FRONTIERS social media accounts for periods of one week. Some suggestions will be provided but total freedom will be ensured.

Additionally, FRONTIERS fellows need to be responsive to questionnaires and interviews conducted by the FRONTIERS team.

In the event of disputes with the researcher or host institution on matters concerning the residency, a concerted effort to find mutually acceptable solutions is essential. Participants should promptly report any relevant incidents that might impede the completion of the residency, and they should be available for any necessary follow-up.

FRONTIERS fellows must maintain accurate records of eligible expenses, following the guidelines provided by the FRONTIERS consortium. Before commencing the residency, participants will be asked to sign a letter of commitment, signifying their agreement to abide by these 'rules of engagement' (see Appendix I).

### 15.2 Rights and duties of the host institution

Host institutions play a crucial role in welcoming FRONTIERS fellows and integrating them into the institution by providing them with access as requested

by their project. A strong support from the institution is essential in ensuring journalistic independence, allowing them to pursue their projects with autonomy.

Host institutions are supposed to engage FRONTIERS fellows by inviting them to participate in activities that foster discussion on the intersections of science and the media. This could involve their involvement in seminars, workshops, and round table discussions. Additionally, host institutions should consider giving them the opportunity to present a seminar on a topic of their choice, as their unique perspectives can enrich the discourse.

As part of this collaborative effort, host institutions should also be prepared to provide responses to questionnaires and interviews conducted by the FRONTIERS team, which helps in assessing the impact of the program.

Furthermore, we invite host institutions to collaborate with the FRONTIERS team to document the FRONTIERS residency, namely through the institution's Communication/Press Office. This collaboration may include writing a profile of the journalist for the FRONTIERS website, allowing a broader audience to understand their background and aspirations, or providing content for social media. Collecting footage to document their residency may be a valuable way to capture the experience and share it with a wider audience. Further information will be provided before the start of the residency.

## 16. Appendix I: Template for the commitment letter (Journalist in residence)

### Commitment letter: Participation in the FRONTIERS project as Journalist in residence

Dear FRONTIERS Committee,

I undersigned [*first name surname*], in my quality of candidate Journalist in Residence at [*institution*], confirm that I am a Journalist and I commit to abide by the 'rules of engagement' outlined by the FRONTIERS project.

In particular, I will:

- Move to a place near the hosting institution before the start and make it my main address for the whole duration of the residency.
- Spend time at the host institution.
- Interact frequently with researchers and other professionals working in the host institution and take part in social and cultural events being carried out there.
- Participate in training organized by the FRONTIERS project.
- Collaborate with the host institution(s) on activities that encourage debate on science and the media (seminars, workshops, round tables).
- Collaborate with the consortium to enrich FRONTIERS social media accounts.
- Be ready to answer to questionnaires and interviews by the research team.
- In case of disagreements with the researcher and/or the hosting institution on issues related to the residency, do my best to find a solution together.
- Report to the consortium any relevant incident that might interfere with the completion of the residency, and be available to follow up.
- Keep track of all eligible expenses based on the instructions provided by the FRONTIERS consortium.

Name, Date, Signature

## 17. Appendix II: Template for the commitment letter (Host institution)

### Commitment letter: Participation in the FRONTIERS project as Host institution

I undersigned [*first name surname*], in my quality of candidate FRONTIERS manager at [*institution*], confirm that the research institution that I represent will abide by the 'rules of engagement' outlined by the FRONTIERS project in case it is selected as a host institution.

Specifically, [*institution*] will fulfill the basic requirements listed below:

1. Badge or other forms of credentials granting access to the relevant premises;
2. Access to the cafeteria/canteen and other shared areas under the same condition as research staff;
3. A working space with access to wi-fi;
4. Access to the institution's library and electronic resources (such as books, scientific journals and databases);
5. Access to all events and activities organized for the institution's staff.

We will support to the best of our possibilities the science journalist in residence before and during the residency, and discuss with them all possible ways to organize lectures, seminars, workshops, round tables on science journalism and science communication for the institution's staff or for the wider public.

Before and during the residency, we will respect and cherish the independence of the science journalist in residence. We know and approve that science journalists in residence are not expected and will not provide any support for institutional communication and are not expected to provide coverage of the host institution's activities, neither during nor after the residency, except for fulfilling their project and their own goals.

Should we decide to support more than one application in the same call, we will inform candidates about concurrent applications, warning them that only one fellowship can be awarded to each institution in each call.

As FRONTIERS manager identified by the host institution, I will provide feedback on the residency as requested by the FRONTIERS staff, during and after the residency, via e-mail, phone and/or other communication tools.

In particular, I will report immediately to the FRONTIERS team all controversies that should arise with the science journalist in residence during or after the residency.

Name, Date, Signature

# FRONTIERS

science journalism initiative



Funded by  
the European Union



European Research Council  
Established by the European Commission