

Call for research projects 2026

"PBC - Primary Biliary Cholangitis" Biomedical Sciences

Maximum budget: **40 000 €** - Maximum duration: **24 months**

Deadline: **June 15th - 5pm** (Paris time)

Your profile must be created on the application platform prior to any application (instructions p3).

Context

Due to the specificities of the field of rare diseases, the ALBI Association and the Fondation Maladies Rares (Foundation For Rare Diseases - FFRD) have agreed on a **partnership to support and stimulate research on Primary Biliary Cholangitis (PBC)** (rare diseases group: *Hepatic disease*; sector(s): **FILFOIE ; RARE-LIVER**).

Since 2003, the aim of the association **ALBI** France¹ has been to support AILD patients (PBC, PSC, AIH, LPAC Syndrome) and families. ALBI France informs patients, promotes their rights, encourage early diagnosis, and enlightens the medical community about the patient's experience of the disease and its treatments, expressing patients uncovered medical needs. At the same time, ALBI initiates and supports scientific research programmes. ALBI cooperates with the concerned French and European Institutions, participating in the governance of FILFOIE, French Liver Rare Diseases Network and ERN RARE-LIVER, European Reference Network. ALBI is a totally independent association under the French law of 1901 and is approved by the French Ministry of Health.

FFRD² is a private non-profit organization, founded in 2012³ by five members⁴, with the aim of helping to (i) deciphering rare diseases to facilitate diagnosis and accelerate the development of new treatments, (ii) improve the daily lives of people with disease and their loved ones. Its mission is of general interest: to lead, coordinate and support research on rare diseases. It provides free support to patient organizations in their efforts to promote rare diseases research, for example through joint calls for projects such as the one proposed here

¹ <https://albi-france.org>

² <https://fondation-maladiesrares.org/en/>

³ PNMR2 : <http://www.sante.gouv.fr/le-plan-national-maladies-rares-2011-14-une-ambition-renouvelee.html>

⁴ AFM-Telethon, Rare Diseases Alliance, Inserm, Conference of University Hospital Directors, Conference of University Presidents

Aim of the call

Primary Biliary Cholangitis (PBC) is a chronic inflammatory disease of the small intrahepatic bile ducts of autoimmune origin which, if inadequately controlled, may progress to cirrhosis and its complications. With a prevalence estimated at 20–30 per 100,000 inhabitants, PBC predominantly affects women (sex-ratio 1/9) of middle age (median age at diagnosis: 55 years). It represents the leading cause of chronic intrahepatic cholestasis in adults. Since the description of PBC, knowledge have increased concerning the main features of this disease improving patient care. In particular significant progress have been made concerning the biological diagnosis (biochemistry and autoantibodies), the non-invasive liver stiffness measurement or the therapeutic management. Nevertheless, current treatments only stabilize the disease at best and many patients show a very insufficient response.

We thus assume that future advancements in better understanding the roles of immunology, genetics, and environmental triggers in the pathogenesis of PBC might lead to new therapeutic approaches. Indeed, some important features remain poorly explained such as the mechanism of fatigue very frequently reported, the genetic susceptibility and family transmission of the disease, the frequent association of PBC with peculiar other autoimmune diseases, the mechanism of action of some of the drugs active in PBC. All these features of the disease are of importance in health-related quality of life of PBC patients, and constitute the basis of this call.

This call aims to support **innovative, fundamental-research programs** on PBC.

All disciplines in Biomedical Sciences are eligible.

Therapeutic clinical trials are not eligible.

The association wishes to support any research aimed at improving knowledge on Primary Biliary Cholangitis, with a particular focus on :

- The role of heredity in disease susceptibility and progression;
- The role of sex and gender in disease prevalence and phenotype;
- The mechanisms underlying the development of associated autoimmune diseases (Sjögren's syndrome, Hashimoto's thyroiditis, systemic sclerosis, autoimmune hepatitis, etc.);
- The mechanisms responsible for fatigue, one of the most debilitating and poorly understood symptoms of PBC;
- The identification and characterization of new therapeutic targets.

Eligibility criteria

The project must explicitly formulate a **research question**, addressing issues specifically related to PBC. The project must demonstrate its **originality, feasibility** and **the expertise(s)** of the researchers involved.

The principal investigator of the project ("lead applicant" – P.I.) must be a **researcher (clinician or biologist)**, belonging to an academic research organization from the European Union⁵. It is expected that the bearer will be statutory and hold a permanent position. Otherwise, the applicant will have to provide proof of an employment contract with the organization managing the allocated funds. The said employment contract must run for the entire duration of the research project plus 6 months.

There must be a clear match between the main methodology used in the project and the expertise of the principal investigator.

⁵ **Public research organization:** *The public research sector includes entities, organized under public law, that carry out research and experimental development (R&D) for the government, higher education institutions or non-profit institutions (associations and foundations).*

Funding

Thanks to ALBI, this call for research projects provides for financial support up to **40 000 €**, for a maximum duration of **24** months.

Funding support can cover, **if it is entirely and exclusively dedicated to the research experiments**, the costs of:

- Fixed-term contract staff (excluding administrative staff).
- Equipment,
- Consumables,
- Travels, up to a maximum of €2,000 (possible overage to be justified precisely in the application form),
- Provision of services/Subcontracting, if they relate only to the execution of a very limited part of the project (maximum 10% of the budget).

No environmental costs or management fees are eligible.

Funding must be **realistic, reasonable, detailed line by line**, and **fully justified**.

For any question regarding the budget, please see: [Guideline to Eligible Expenses](#)

Co-financing of the selected project is possible as long as no conflict of interest exists.

The lead applicant will be responsible for the management of the allocated funds, including, where applicable, the agreement and distribution to the partner teams.

An agreement will be established between the organization managing the research programme (organization of the main leader) and FFRD. **The management organization will not be able to charge any management fee on the amount granted.** *FFRD manages the financial support provided by ALBI and oversees the scientific and budgetary aspects of the winning projects. FFRD does not charge any fees on the sums entrusted to it by ALBI; these will be paid in full to the winning projects.*

Submission process, Selection and Scheduled

The application form, in English, must be completed at <https://ffrd.syntosolution.com/> before **15/06/2026, 5pm** (Paris time).

You must have already created your profile on the application platform before submitting (a delay may be necessary). Technical support for the platform is available from 9am to 6pm until 12/06/2026.

The joint selection by ALBI association and FFRD will take place on the basis of:

- validation of the eligibility criteria by FFRD,
- of the priorities of ALBI association,
- evaluations by independent external experts (see Annex);

The members of the board of ALBI and the external experts sign a confidentiality and a non-conflict-of-interest agreement.

The reports, documents and filings sent to the members of the board of ALBI are confidential.

Scientific and financial follow-up

ALBI is committed to this approach with gravity and a strong sense of responsibility. The budget that its Board of Directors will commit to the selected projects comes exclusively from donations. These include donations from members, as well as funds donated by friends and families, sometimes following the death of one of their own, in a gesture of solidarity with those who are waiting and hoping. PI are expected to adhere to this commitment.

Half of the grant will be paid at the start of the project.

For projects longer than one year, the PI will have to share briefly by email, every 6 months, on the progress of the project (a few lines).

A complete scientific and financial report must be produced by the PI at mid-term, in order to justify the correct progress of the work and trigger the payment of 40% of the grant.

A final scientific and financial report must be produced by the PI 1 month after the end of the project in order to trigger the payment of the remaining 10% of the grant.

Each report must be accompanied by a report in French, understandable by all members of the association, regardless of their scientific knowledge.

It is expected that the work carried out and the results obtained at the end of the project will be promoted, in the form of publications, and scientific and mainstream communications. The project leader will make himself available for an annual presentation of his results at the annual scientific meeting organized by ALBI, and at an bi-annual remote meeting organized by the PI together with ALBI board.

Annex

Evaluation criteria

1. Interest and importance of the research project to meet the missions of the association.

Does this study address an important problem? Innovative potential of the expected results for exploitation and for future relevant applications? Is there a sufficient body of evidence for high quality research that supports the rationale? How is the project positioned regarding international competition in the field?

2. Quality and feasibility

Soundness of the concept, clarity, originality, and pertinence of the objectives. Are the conceptual framework, design, methods techniques, and analyses adequately developed, and appropriate for the aims of the projects? Coherence and effectiveness of the work plan, including appropriateness of the timeframe, allocation of task and resources (financial, human, and technological resources linked to the laboratory's infrastructure). Does the applicant acknowledge potential problem areas and consider alternative strategies? Effectiveness of the proposed measures to exploit and disseminate the project results.

3. Quality of the applicant

Ability of the applicant to conduct the research based on the quality of the CV, on its publications and on the quality of the laboratory. Competence and experience of participating research partners. Does the applicant have the right network of collaborators to undertake this type of project? If not, is it important for the Association to attract this researcher because of their skills or previous work on related subjects?

4. Budget

Budget and cost-effectiveness of the project (rational distribution of resources in relation to project's activities, partner responsibilities, and time frame).