



e-MERLIN/VLBI National Radio Astronomy Facility
www.e-merlin.ac.uk

Invitation for proposals: Cycle-21

Deadline for Receipt of Proposals: 13:59:59 UT on 23rd October 2025

e-MERLIN requests proposals from the international astronomical community for observations to be made during *Cycle-21*. Proposals are competitively peer-reviewed under standard STFC rules by the e-MERLIN Time Allocation Committee (TAG). Awards will be made on the basis of scientific merit and technical feasibility alone.

The *enhanced Multi Element Remotely Linked Interferometer Network* provides high resolution (12-150 mas), high sensitivity (microJy) imaging at cm wavelengths as well as spectroscopy, astrometry and polarimetry. e-MERLIN is an 'SKA-pathfinder' instrument providing observations with angular resolutions and frequencies comparable to those that will be provided by SKA-mid.

Cycle-21 e-MERLIN Observations:

[February 1st to July 31st, 2026]

Continuum observing frequencies available: -

- L-Band: Continuous 512 MHz Band: 1.25 GHz to 1.75 GHz (RFI notch filtering fitted)
- C-Band: Continuous 512 MHz Band distributed between: 4.3 GHz to 7.5 GHz
- K-Band: Continuous 512 MHz Band distributed between: 19 GHz to 25 GHz

System parameters for observations of a continuum source in optimum conditions: -

Observing Bands	1.25 - 1.75 GHz (L-band)	4.3 - 7.5 GHz (C-band)	19 - 25 GHz (K-band)	
Maximum angular resolution	~150	~40	~12	(milliarcsec)
[§] RMS level for 8 hours on-source (Briggs robust=0.5 CASA weighting)	~24/12*	~17/10*	~130**	(μJy/beam)
Elapsed time includes phase-calibration overheads—typically 12-hr elapsed results in ~8-hr on-source				
Maximum bandwidth/polarisation	512	512†	512†	(MHz)

[§] L-Band operations have been affected by additional legal transmissions within the e-MERLIN observing band. Additional flag-masks and in-line filters have been deployed to address these issues. The quoted sensitivities at L-Band in this call and in the e-MERLIN Sensitivity Calculator, reflect changes resulting from the filter/flag-mask installation.

Briggs robust=0 CASA weighting has an optimal mix of resolution and sensitivity. *Natural* has greater sensitivity, but with lower resolution

* The use of the Lovell telescope at L-Band, and at C-Band with updated receiver systems reduces the r.m.s. noise levels in the central part of the field of view by ~50% compared with the array not including the Lovell Telescope.

** The sensitivity of e-MERLIN K-band observations are weather and elevation dependent. K-band observations will be dynamically scheduled to optimise for the most ideal weather conditions.

† Frequency flexibility allows the positioning of a number of 512MHz sub-bands within the frequency ranges shown for C- and K-Band. This may be used to observe with increased fractional bandwidth and/or spectral coverage at the expense of the required observing time since only a single 512 MHz sub-band may be observed at any one time.

For Detailed Observation Planning - See The e-MERLIN Sensitivity Calculator & Observing Page:

<https://www.e-merlin.ac.uk/calc.html>

<https://www.e-merlin.ac.uk/observe.html>

e-MERLIN proposals must follow dual-anonymisation guidelines.

Proposal Submission: Proposals should be submitted via the updated e-MERLIN web-based *Polaris* proposal tool from **2nd October 2025**. Guidance and tex-based template files on using *Polaris* will be made available in the coming weeks prior to this date. A Zoom webinar on *Polaris* proposal submission will also be available on that date. For details please see: <https://www.e-merlin.ac.uk/observe.html>

- **Lovell 76m Telescope:** Proposers requesting inclusion of the Lovell telescope must provide a detailed supporting case. Proposers should consult the allocated e-MERLIN Legacy Programmes to avoid conflicts. In cases where PATT proposals directly replicate portions of allocated legacy projects, legacy projects will normally be given priority. For details, please consult the *Science Research with e-MERLIN* webpage (<https://www.e-merlin.ac.uk/science.html>) or contact emerlin.support@jb.man.ac.uk.
- **Spectral Line Observations:** Spectral line configuration details are available at <https://www.e-merlin.ac.uk/observe.html>
- **e-MERLIN User Support:** Support is available throughout the full lifecycle (proposal to publication) of projects for all users via both face-to-face and remote assistance; and online tools. The e-MERLIN science support team is happy to tailor levels of assistance dependent on the requirements of individual users or projects. Additional support is also available through the ACME Trans-National Access Programme funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No. 101131928, for visits to European institutes that provide direct training & expert guidance in multi-messenger astronomy. For *eligible* projects, (*multi-messenger/waveband [Radio+...]*), this support could include travel reimbursement for visiting JBCA to process and analyse your e-MERLIN data for a multi-messenger programme. For further information please contact emerlin.support@jb.man.ac.uk.
- **Russian Affiliated Scientists:** STFC strongly condemn the Russian government's invasion of Ukraine. In line with the UK government's response, e-MERLIN is unable to accept proposals from projects including researchers affiliated with Russian Institutes at this time.

e-MERLIN Science: e-MERLIN observations address a broad range of scientific questions. Its unique combination of angular resolution and micro-Jansky sensitivity provide crucial insights in multiple science areas. See <https://www.e-merlin.ac.uk/science.html> for further details.

e-MERLIN Transient Science: Enhanced ToO availability has been introduced to provide additional ToO programmes which may not require all antennas or have more relaxed trigger cadences. An RRT (Rapid-Response Time) category is now available for urgent transient programmes not suitable for ToO submission. See www.e-merlin.ac.uk. For any direct clashes between RRT & ToO programmes, ToO take precedence.

e-MERLIN+EVN Observations: The full integration of e-MERLIN within the European VLBI Network (EVN) is also available for proposals. This mode of observations provides a shorter spacing (10-200 km) component to the EVN which allows imaging of a wider range of spatial scales. Proposals for EVN+e-MERLIN observations should be submitted via the EVN-Programme Committee. <https://www.evlbi.org> During Cycle-21 the VLBI disk-recording sessions are from 26th February – 19th March and from 28th May – 18th June 2026, during which time e-MERLIN is available for joint EVN/e-MERLIN observations. Details can be found via the EVN web pages (<https://www.evlbi.org>).

EVN Deadlines: The current EVN Call for Proposals (including combined EVN+e-MERLIN observations) can be found at <https://www.evlbi.org/>. The current deadlines for upcoming EVN+e-MERLIN proposals are: **1st October 2025, 1st February 2026, & 1st June 2026.**

For assistance or you have any queries please contact emerlin.support@jb.man.ac.uk

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