FTI-STRATEGIE NIEDERÖSTERREICH 2021–2027

GESELLSCHAFT FÜR FORSCHUNGS FÖRDERUNG NIEDERÖSTERREICH

RTI-DISSERTATIONS 2026

DATE: 18.11.2026

CALL DOCUMENT

WISSENSCHAFT • FORSCHUNG NIEDERÖSTERREICH

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION 2
2 THEMATIC ORIENTATION 3
3 GOALS 3
4 FRAMEWORK 3
5 PROJECT CONSORTIUM 5
6 PROCEDURE 6
7 EVALUATION 7
8 OBLIGATIONS OF THE APPLICANT ORGANISATION(S) 8
9 TERMINATION AND RECOVERY OF FUNDING 9
10 DATA PROTECTION 9
11 LEGAL BASIS 10

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1 INTRODUCTION

The funding of the employment of PhD candidates at colleges, universities and non-university research institutions located in Lower Austria aims to strengthen the next generation of scientists in Lower Austria.

The targeted promotion and financial security of young scientists are important prerequisites for ensuring the scientific qualification and innovative strength of the state. Qualified young scientists contribute significantly to the fact that science and research institutions can act dynamically and gain research strength and visibility. The promotion of PhD candidates therefore increases the appeal of the location in national and international competition.

The Gesellschaft für Forschungsförderung NÖ (GFF NÖ) supports dissertation projects in non-profit Lower Austrian research and educational institutions by financing the employment of highly qualified PhD candidates in the field of basic and translational research.

KEY POINTS:

RTI-Field of Action	open to all fields of action
Funding volume	€ 2.000.000,-
Max. funding per project	1) 50% or 100% (in case of cooperative application) of the PhD candidate's staff costs, capped at the current annual FWF rate for PhD candidates 2) 100% of conference participation costs up to a maximum of € 3.000,-
Duration	36 months / max. until completion of the PhD studies
Submission period	18.11.2026 to 16.02.2027 (12:00 a.m.)
Submission platform	https://calls.einreichsystem.at/
Contact	Antonia Miserka, MA Call- & Programme-Management M: +43 664 14 65 024 E: a.miserka@gff-noe.at

2 THEMATIC ORIENTATION

Submission is possible for dissertation projects with reference to all fields of action of the RTI Strategy Lower Austria 2027:

- Health and nutrition
- Environment, climate and resources
- Digitalization, smart production and materials
- Society and culture

3 GOALS

The funding of the employment of PhD candidates should contribute to the following goals:

- Completion of the dissertation by the PhD candidate to strengthen the next generation of scientists in Lower Austria
- Strengthening of colleges, universities and non-university research institutions in Lower Austria
- Increasing the appeal and visibility of the location

4 FRAMEWORK

4.1. TYPE OF FUNDING

The funding is a grant. The **subject of funding** is the employment relationship of the PhD candidate named in the application, generally for 30 hours per week.

Within the framework of the funded employment relationship, PhD candidates must devote themselves exclusively to **activities** that are directly related to their dissertation and promote the successful completion of their dissertation. These may include other (third-party funded) research or teaching activities, provided that they have a demonstrable benefit for the dissertation.

Stays/internships abroad are possible within the framework of the funded employment relationship, provided that they are of demonstrable benefit to the dissertation.

4.2. DURATION

The funding is awarded for the **minimum duration of a PhD degree** in Austria (usually 36 months) [1], but no longer than until the completion of the PhD degree[2]. The dissertation is completed with the issuance of the completion certificate.

[1] Studying in Austria

[2] Applications for an individual PhD programme (“individuelle Promotion”) can only be submitted following consultation with the funding agency and a subsequent individual assessment of the admission requirements. In this case, too, the funding period is limited to a maximum of 36 months.

An interruption and **cost-neutral extension** of the funding is possible in justified exceptional cases (for example, in the case of maternity leave and parental leave in accordance with the applicable legal provisions).

In the event of an interruption due to **parental leave** or in **exceptional cases** affecting the personal life of the PhD candidate, it is possible to resume work or be employed for less than 30 hours per week. This must be applied for separately and approved by the funding agency (GFF).

4.3. FUNDABLE COSTS

In accordance with the principles of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness, expenditures are only eligible for funding to the extent that they are necessary and appropriate in terms of their nature and amount for achieving the funding objective.

PERSONNEL COSTS

- The **gross personnel costs** (including employer contributions) of the PhD candidate **for 30 hours per week**[3] are eligible for funding. However, these are capped at the current annual **FWF rate**[4].
- The **funding intensity** for **gross personnel** costs is **50% for non-cooperative** projects and **100% for cooperative projects** (see section 4.4).
- The funded institutions commit to paying the PhD candidate a **minimum salary** equal to the current annual **FWF rate**[5] for the duration of the funding period. **Indexation must be carried out for each calendar year.**
- The PhD candidate must be **employed** for the entire duration of the funding period at at least one eligible institution based in Lower Austria.

MATERIAL COSTS

- **Conference participation:**
  - Participation fees, travel, and accommodation costs totaling a maximum of **€ 3.000,--** will be funded, whereby the costs can be used as needed **throughout the entire project period.**
  - The costs can only be claimed if the doctoral candidate **actively participates** in the conference (lecture, poster presentation, etc.).
  - The **funding intensity** for this cost category is 100%.

4.4. COOPERATION

NON COOPERATIVE APPLICATION

- **50% of eligible gross personnel costs** (including employer contributions) are subsidized.
- The **difference** between this and the actual costs can be financed by other third-party funds. These **third-party funds** may come from private and/or public sources, provided that they do not conflict with the applicable funding conditions (EU, federal, state, etc.) and the project relevance of the associated activities is clear (see section 4.1).

[3] See Financial Reporting Guide
[4] FWF Personnel Costs and Salary Rates - FWF
[5] FWF Personnel Costs and Salary Rates - FWF

COOPERATIVE APPLICATION

- **100% of eligible gross personnel costs** (including employer contributions) are funded (50% of the funding per institution).
- The prerequisite is the **joint submission** of two independent institutions that are eligible to apply[6].
- The **PhD candidate is assigned 15 hours to each** of the two participating institutions. This can be implemented either with a separate employment contract for each institution or by means of employment at the first institution and a corresponding transfer contract with the second institution.

4.5. FINANCIAL REPORTING

The intended use of the funding must be proven within the scope of reporting (see GFF financial reporting guide) and during financial audits (financial controls) using cost center extracts or receipt lists.

4.6. USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

The use of artificial intelligence in the preparation of research proposals is generally permitted, but must be disclosed at the time of submission. Regardless of whether AI tools are used, applicants bear full responsibility for all content in the research proposal and must ensure that it is factually correct.

5 PROJECT CONSORTIUM

5.1. ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS

- **Lead partner** can only be universities (incl. universities for applied sciences) and non-university research institutions[7] with a location in Lower Austria.
- The application must be written and submitted **together** with the **PhD candidate**.
- **Non-eligible institutions:**
  - Organisations with a majority ownership by the federal state of Lower Austria (>50%) (with the exception of hospitals active in research or university clinics)
  - Commercial enterprises[8]

5.2. PHD CANDIDATE

- A **proof of an academic degree** entitling the holder for a doctorate or PhD study at a university or research or educational institution with the right to award doctorates has to be submitted.[9]

[6] Two organisations are regarded as independent of one another if they are legally, financially and organisationally separate.
[7] Non-university research institutions are - regardless of their legal form or method of financing - institutions whose main task is to conduct independent research. If such an institution also carries out economic activities, separate accounting (for financing, costs and revenues) is required.
[8] For the purposes of this tender, companies are commercial or professional economic entities that carry out a long-term, independent, organized economic activity aimed at producing or providing services and making a profit.
[9] Confirmation of a PhD program that enables to start a PhD studies without a master's/diploma is permissible after consultation with the funding agency.

- The formal **supervision** of the dissertation project can be agreed on with any university or research institution with the right to award PhDs. This does not necessarily have to be the institution submitting the application.
- **Proof of admission to a PhD program** and the **dissertation agreement** at a university with the right to award doctorates has to be submitted (subsequent submission is possible after consultation with the funding agency).
- The earliest **date** for starting with the PhD Thesis is **01.01.2027**.
- There is **no age limit**.

5.3. EQUALITY

Equal opportunities are a prerequisite for a positive assessment of the application. The application must describe what measures have been taken or are planned by the participating institutions to ensure equal opportunities in their organization

6 PROCEDURE

6.1. SUBMISSION

RTI calls are time-limited thematic calls for proposals within which applications can be submitted. The application language is English; this applies to all parts of the application.[10] Proposals can be submitted through the GFF submission system (https://calls.einreichsystem.at).

6.2. EX-ANTE EVALUIERUNG

EVALUATION PROCEDURE AND PROJECT SELECTION

All applications submitted on time will first be checked by the GFF to ensure that they meet the formal criteria.

The GFF puts together a jury of at least three independent external experts.[11]

The evaluation is carried out by the jury members and by independent external experts additionally selected by the GFF on the basis of the defined assessment criteria (see section 7).

Usually, two expert reports are drawn up for each project application. A ranking is then compiled on the basis of the grades awarded, and the applications are assessed for eligibility for funding (see section 7).

In a jury meeting, the final selection of the applications to be funded is made on the basis of the expert reviews and the assessments of the jury members.

DECISION ON FUNDING

The GFF supervisory board decides on the funding based on the jury's recommendation.

[10] The application language "English" ensures the possibility of peer review by international scientific experts. A German-language application can only be approved in exceptional cases.
[11] See Evaluation Guidelines

6.3. FUNDING PERIOD

FUNDING AGREEMENT

The funding agreement is concluded between the GFF and the funding recipient based on the legal basis applicable to this call (see section 11).

PROJECT START

The funding of the employment relationship can start at the earliest on **01.04.2027** (retroactive funding) and at the latest six months after signing the funding contract. In justified exceptional cases, this deadline can be extended after consultation with the GFF and by submitting a written (informal) application.

REPORTING

The annual reports (each as of 31.12.) are prepared and submitted by the funding recipients together with the PhD candidate in the submission system of the GFF (https://calls.einreichsystem.at/). Even after the end of the project, scientific outputs directly related to the funding should be reported in the submission system.

FUNDING RATES

Funding rates are paid annually in advance, with 10% of each funding rate being withheld and only paid out after the final report has been examined.

COMPLETION

The funding is formally concluded after the lead partners have submitted the final report to the GFF through the submission system (https://calls.einreichsystem.at/) and after the GFF has approved the report and disbursed any remaining funding by the GFF.

6.4. INTERIM AND EX-POST EVALUATION

Within the framework of announced interim and / or ex-post evaluations, the funding agency or a third party commissioned by it may carry out an examination of the use of the funds in accordance with their intended purpose.

7 EVALUATION

7.1. FORMAL ASSESSMENT

- Completeness of the application
- Fulfilment of the framework conditions under section 4
- Fulfilment of the project consortium conditions under section 5

Failure to meet one or more of the requirements may result in disqualification of the application even before the expert evaluation.

7.2. EXPERT EVALUATION

The assessment by external independent expert evaluators is based on a points system and an additional classification of the project's eligibility for funding (A – eligible for priority funding, B – eligible in principle, C – eligible subject to conditions, D – not eligible). The assessment is based on two main criteria (K1 and K2), each of which is divided into several subordinate sub-criteria.

The maximum number of points for an assessment is 10 points. The actual score is made up of the points awarded for each of the two main criteria. The maximum number of points per main criterion is 5 points (2 * max. 5 points = max. 10 points). The actual number of points per main criterion is determined from the points of the corresponding sub-criteria, for which a maximum of 5 points can also be awarded. The points for the main criteria are calculated from the arithmetic mean of the sub-criteria, which in turn results in the maximum number of points.

The following main and sub-criteria are used for the assessment:

- **Excellence [K1]**
  - Originality and innovation
  - Objectives and consistency
  - Quality and efficiency of the method(s)
  - Relevance and internationality

- **Implementation [K2]**
  - Quality and efficiency of the concept
  - Feasibility of the project
  - Institutional framework
  - Qualification

8 OBLIGATIONS OF THE APPLICANT ORGANISATION(S)

The applicant organisation must comply with the following:

- Efficient, economical, appropriate and transparent use of funds.
- Keeping separate and comprehensive records to demonstrate the implementation of the funded project. Securing storage of records and supporting documents during and for at least seven years after the end of the project, unless there are legal requirements to the contrary.
- Use of an adequate accounting system.
- Writing and submitting appropriate interim and final reports to the funding agency, according to the reporting structure provided by the agency.
- Allowing audits and evaluations by the funding agency and third parties commissioned by it and obligation to provide the relevant information.
- Timely notification of all significant events relevant to the implementation of the funded project.
- Provision of information for the public relations work of the funding agency.
- Establishing the visibility of the funding agency and the state of Lower Austria as a funding provider on websites, publications and events in connection with the funded activity (the use of logos and funding information is regulated in the funding agreement).
- Compliance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United Nations (UNO) and the further strategic embedding of the RTI Strategy Lower Austria 2021 – 2027.

9 TERMINATION AND RECOVERY OF FUNDING

With regard to the reduction, evaluation and reclaiming of funding, the provisions of Section 13 of the guidelines for funding under the Lower Austrian Cultural Promotion Act 1996 in the area of science, research and tertiary education apply.

The following point can also lead to a complete reclaim and discontinuation of the promised funding:

- The composition of the project consortium was changed without the approval of the funding agency and key partners are no longer part of the consortium.

10 DATA PROTECTION

10.1. RESPONSIBLE PERSON ACCORDING TO THE GDPR

Gesellschaft fuer Forschungsfoerderung NOE mbH, A-3100 St. Pölten, Hypogasse 1, 1st floor, T: +43 2742 27570-0, E: office@gff-noe.at (GFF) is responsible for processing your personal data Responsible person in connection with your funding application in accordance with Art. 7 Z7 GDPR.

10.2. PURPOSE AND LEGAL BASIS OF DATA PROCESSING

In order to process and fulfill the funding application, the GFF processes the following personal data from you: Names and professional contact details of the contact person at the funding applicants' institutions; Names, professional contact details and CVs of the scientific management and the project partners; Names and contact details of other scientific or technical staff.

The legal basis for this data processing is the fulfillment of the contract in accordance with Article 6 Paragraph 1 Letter b of the GDPR, so that the GFF can process and fulfill your funding application.

10.3. STORAGE PERIOD

The GFF stores your personal data until your funding application has been fully processed (from submission to termination of the funding contract, including any necessary data transfer to the state of Lower Austria, external experts and examiners, insofar as this is necessary to fulfill the funding application).

In addition, GFF only stores your personal data to the extent necessary to fulfill legal retention obligations or to pursue or defend against legal claims.

10.4. DATA RECIPIENT

We will transmit your personal data to the following third parties if this is necessary to fulfill your funding application:

• State of Lower Austria

• External experts

• External examiners

In addition, GFF uses contract processors who process the data on their behalf. The processors may only process the data provided to them in accordance with our instructions and to carry out services for us. The GFF contractually obliges these processors to ensure the confidentiality and security of the personal data processed as part of the order.

10.5. YOUR RIGHTS UNDER THE GDPR

As the person responsible under the GDPR, you have the following rights towards GFF: (i) information (Art. 15 GDPR); (ii) correction (Article 16 GDPR); (iii) deletion (Article 17 GDPR); (iv) Restriction of processing (Article 18 GDPR); (v) objection (Art. 21 GDPR); (vi) data portability (Article 20 GDPR); (vii) Complaint to the responsible supervisory authority (Art. 77 GDPR), whereby in Austria the data protection authority (www.dsb.gv.at) is responsible.

Your personal data will be processed for the duration of the entire business relationship (from the submission to the termination of a grant agreement, including any necessary data transfer to the Province of Lower Austria as the grantor, external expert reviewers, and auditors) and beyond in accordance with the statutory storage and documentation obligations under the currently applicable Austrian Data Protection Act (DSG) and the European General Data Protection Regulation (DSGVO).

11 LEGAL BASIS

- NÖ Kulturförderungsgesetz 1996
- Richtlinien für die Förderung nach dem NÖ Kulturförderungsgesetz 1996 Bereich Wissenschaft, Forschung und tertiäre Bildung

These guidelines and the call document do not constitute a legal entitlement to the granting of funding, either in terms of the reason for the subsidy or the amount of the subsidy. The place of jurisdiction for all disputes arising from the granting of a fund is the Regional Court of St. Pölten.

This call document comes into force on **18.11.2026** and applies to funding applications in the call "**RTI Dissertations 2026**". Amendments will be published online (calls.einreichsystem.at).