

RTI PROJECTS 2026: BASIC RESEARCH

FIELD OF ACTION: SOCIETY AND CULTURE

DATE: 30.03.2026
CALL DOCUMENT

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I. INTRODUCTION

The funding of basic research projects is intended to strengthen scientific research in the fields of action of the Lower Austria RTI Strategy 2027. The research should contribute to solving societal challenges in the medium and long term and have societal benefits.

KEY POINTS:

RTI-Field of action	Society and culture
Funding Volume	€ 1.800.000,--
Max. funding per project	€ 360.000,--
Funding rate	Max. 90% of eligible costs
Project duration	min. 2 / max. 3 years
Submission	30.03.2026 to 26.06.2026 (12:00)
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

This call invites funding applications for (application-oriented) basic research projects within the RTI field of action "Society and Culture". In an increasingly complex society, engagement with society and culture should provide essential guidance and make a decisive contribution to the reflection upon and understanding of social, political, economic and cultural developments.

The call is aimed at basic research projects that address issues in the **humanities, social sciences and cultural studies**. Interdisciplinary projects are eligible, but must have a primary focus on the humanities, social sciences or cultural studies (the discipline must account for at least 51%).

3. OBJECTIVES

Projects should make contributions to the following **objectives**:

- Expansion of research competencies in Lower Austria in the addressed topic
- Increasing the visibility and profile of the location
- Expansion of cooperation between the participating institutions; cooperation and consortia in the projects should go beyond third-party services; the aim is the joint scientific processing of a problem by the project partners
- Contribution to innovations and solution of technological, economic, societal, and ecological challenges; including access to scientific knowledge and information

4. FRAMEWORK

4.1. TYPE OF FUNDING

The funding is a grant. The funding intensity is **up to 90% of the eligible costs**.¹

4.2. DURATION

The duration of the funded projects is a **minimum of two and a maximum of three years**. Cost-neutral **project extensions** are possible in justified exceptional cases. An extension of the project duration must be applied for separately and approved by the funding agency (GFF).

4.3. FUNDING AMOUNT

The maximum funding amount is up to € 360.000, depending on the duration:

- 2 years project duration: up to € 240.000,-
- 2.5 years project duration: up to € 300.000,-
- 3 years project duration: up to € 360.000,-

¹ The funding rate can also be lower, depending on the amount of costs applied for. (e.g., costs claimed = €500,000; maximum grant amount = €360,000; grant rate = 72%).

4.4. ELIGIBLE COSTS

In accordance with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness, expenses are only eligible for funding to the extent that they are necessary and reasonable in terms of their type and amount to achieve the purpose of the funding. Inappropriate calculations may be a reason for rejection despite the excellence of the content of the funding application.

The following costs are **eligible** if they are relevant to the project:

COSTS FOR SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL STAFF²

- The calculation of eligible personnel costs is based on the planned or actual gross personnel costs plus a lump sum for non-wage labour costs (LNK) of 30%.
- The **maximum eligible personnel costs per person** are capped at the maximum contribution base set annually by the responsible federal ministry. *Example: maximum contribution base 2026 = € 6.930 / month; max. eligible personnel costs per person = € 6.930 x 14 = € 97.020 (excl. LNK)*

R&D-SPECIFIC INSTRUMENTS AND EQUIPMENT

Costs for **R&D-specific instruments and equipment** that have to be purchased to implement the project are eligible for funding on a pro rata basis according to their use in the project via **depreciation for wear and tear (Abschreibung für Abnutzung, AfA)**.

MATERIAL COSTS AND OTHER COSTS

- Test and consumable material
- Acquisition costs up to the limit of low-value assets³
- Costs for publications in connection with the project
- Event costs and participation fees
- Travel expenses
- Standard industry rates for study participants
- License costs⁴
- Internal service billing⁵

THIRD-PARTY SERVICES

Third-party services in compliance with the arm's length principle:

- Max. 10% of the total eligible costs
- Third-party service providers can provide definable and predetermined services; however, they cannot assume any central activities in the project (such as leading a work package or similar).
- Third-party service providers cannot assert any exploitation rights (IPR) on the project result.
- Lead partners, project partners and their affiliated institutions cannot provide third-party services in the project.

² Only people who actually contribute quantifiable work and for whom personnel costs are applied for can be integrated into the project as project partners and employees.

³ 2026: max. 1.000 Euro per Acquisition; except for basic equipment

⁴ According to the share of use in the project; except basic equipment

⁵ Can be billed as costs per unit ("unit costs"). The respective "unit costs" must be based on calculation models that are consistent, plausible, and verifiable by third parties. Only direct and indirect costs that can actually and additionally be allocated to the project, either directly or via cost units, can be included in the "unit costs."

OVERHEAD COSTS

Overheads are eligible only as a flat rate of 25% on the eligible personnel costs, depreciation for wear and tear (AfA), material costs and other direct costs (but not internal service billing or third-party services). Thus, for example, the following types of costs are covered as a lump sum:

- Rent and operating costs
- Office supplies
- Administrative staff costs

4.5. NON-ELIGIBLE COSTS

- Costs outside the project period
- Invoices that are not in the name of the recipients
- Payments not made by grantees
- Discounts and rebates
- Value-added tax, provided that the applicants are entitled to deduct input tax.
- (Partial) amounts from payments for which credit notes were subsequently granted or charged back
- Costs for the acquisition of land
- Financing costs
- Cash payments over € 5.000,00
- Investments and acquisition costs (above the threshold of low-value assets)

4.6. OPEN SCIENCE

The GFF's **Open Science Policy**⁶, in effect since the beginning of 2025, follows the fundamental principles of Open Science and aims to ensure the free accessibility, usability, and further processing of scientific knowledge and research data. It builds on the two most important Open Science approaches: **Open Research Data** and **Open Access Publications (OA)**.

Costs for Open Science activities can therefore be budgeted and justified in the **project proposal**.⁷ In addition, reporting on compliance with the GFF Open Science Policy is required in the **interim** and **final reports** of the ongoing project. This also includes a **data management plan** that defines and describes the relevant datasets that will be generated and/or analyzed, as well as the corresponding protocols.

4.7. COST ACCOUNTING

Evidence of the proper use of the funding must be provided as part of the reporting system and, if necessary, during financial audits (financial controls). In the reporting system, this evidence is provided in the form of structured cost center statements or lists of documents. In the financial audit, these cost center statements or lists of documents are used as the basis for the audit.

⁶ [See GFF Open Science Policy](#)

⁷ Costs for publications that do not comply with the OA principle cannot be funded.

5. PROJECT CONSORTIUM

5.1. ELIGIBILITY

- **Eligible institutions:**
 - **The lead partner** can only be a university, college or non-university research institution located in Lower Austria.
 - **Project partners** can be colleges, universities, non-university research institutions and non-profit organizations located in or outside Lower Austria.
- **Non-eligible institutions:**
 - Facilities directly majority-owned (>50%) by the State of Lower Austria (except for clinics in the research sector);
 - Industrial companies⁸.

A funding application is not permitted if one cooperation partner is not eligible for funding.

5.2. COOPERATIONS

- A collaboration is the effective cooperation of at least two independent and eligible institutions as defined in section 5.1 of this call document.
- A maximum of 80% of the funding may be used by one institution.
- In the case of funding, the funding agency recommends that a consortium agreement be drawn up between all institutions named in the funding application before the project starts in order to regulate the internal relationships of the collaboration.
- The inclusion of non-eligible institutions via a letter of intent (LOI) is possible.

5.3. USE OF FUNDS IN LOWER AUSTRIA

Since the funding is provided by the province of Lower Austria, a predominant use of the funding in Lower Austria ($\geq 75\%$) is required.

5.4. COMPOSITION OF THE PROJECT TEAM

- The principal investigator's research must focus on the **humanities, social sciences and cultural studies**.
- The project should offer researchers (especially young researchers) the opportunity to develop and advance their academic careers.
- Equal opportunities are a prerequisite for a positive review of the application. This equal opportunity can be reflected, for example, in the diversity of the project team. The project proposal should also describe what measures the participating institutions have taken or plan to take to ensure equal opportunities within their organization.

⁸ For the purposes of this call document, 'industrial company' refers to commercial or self-employed economic entities that engage in the production of goods or the provision of services, as well as in long-term, independent, organised economic activities aimed at making a profit.

6. PROCEDURE

6.1. SUBMISSION

RTI calls are thematic calls for a limited period of time, where proposals for funding can be submitted. The application language is English; this applies to all parts of the application.⁹ Submission is possible from **30.03.2026** to **26.06.2026, 12.00 noon** via the GFF submission system (<https://calls.einreichsystem.at/>).

6.2. EX-ANTE EVALUATION

EVALUATION PROCEDURE AND PROJECT SELECTION

All proposals submitted by the deadline will first be reviewed by GFF to ensure that they meet the formal criteria (see 7.1).

The GFF assembles a jury of independent external experts (see [Evaluation Guidelines](#)). For each project application, at least two expert reviews are prepared on the basis of the defined evaluation criteria (see 7.2). In a final jury meeting, a recommendation for funding is prepared on the basis of the expert reviews.

FUNDING DECISION

Based on the recommendation by the jury, the supervisory board of the GFF decides on the funding.

6.3. FUNDING PERIOD

FUNDING AGREEMENT

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

PROJECT START

The project has to start no later than six months after signing the grant agreement. In justified exceptional cases, this deadline may be extended after consultation with GFF and by submitting a written (informal) application.

REPORTING

The annual reports are prepared and submitted by the grantees in the GFF submission system (<https://calls.einreichsystem.at/>). Even after the project has ended, research outputs directly related to the funding should be reported via the submission system.

FUNDING RATES

Funding rates are paid annually in advance, with 10% of the total funding amount being paid out after review of the final report.

⁹ 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.

PROJECT 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 conduct an audit to determine whether the funding is being used for its intended purpose.

7. EVALUATION CRITERIA

7.1. FORMAL REVIEW

- Completeness of the application
- Fulfillment of the thematic focus under section 2
- Fulfillment of the requirements under section 4 and 5
- If the project requires a positive ethics approval, this must be clearly stated in the application. In the event of funding, the ethics approval must be submitted by the start of the project. In justified exceptional cases, it may be submitted later.

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 evaluation is carried out on the basis of a point system by external independent experts (see 6.2). The evaluation is carried out on the basis of three main criteria (K1-3), each of which is subdivided into several subordinate sub-criteria.

The maximum number of points for an assessment is 15 points. The actual number of points is made up of the points awarded for each of the three main criteria. The maximum number of points per main criterion is 5 points (3 * max. 5 points = max. 15 points). The actual number of points per main criterion is in turn determined from the points of the corresponding sub-criteria, for which a maximum of 5 points can also be awarded in each case. 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 assessment:

- **Excellence [K1]**
 - Originality and innovation
 - Objective and stringency
 - Quality and effectiveness of the method
 - Relevance and international connectivity
- **Implementation [K2]**
 - Quality and efficiency of the work program
 - Feasibility of the project

- Financial and resource planning
- Institutional framework and strategic embedding
- Personnel composition and qualification
- **Impact [K3]**
 - Impact on science
 - Impact on the research and education location
 - Career development (especially of young scientists)
 - Social / economic / ecological / technological impact

8. OBLIGATIONS OF THE BENEFICIARIES

Beneficiaries are required to comply with the following points:

- Economic, economical, appropriate and transparent use of funds.
- Maintaining separate and comprehensive records to demonstrate the implementation of the funded project and retaining the records and supporting documentation during and for at least an additional ten years after the end of the project, unless there are legal requirements beyond that.
- Maintenance of an adequate accounting system.
- Submission of appropriate interim and final reports to the funding agency, in accordance with the schedule and reporting structure provided by the funding agency.
- Enabling of audits and evaluations on the part of the funding agency and third parties commissioned by it, as well as the obligation to provide corresponding information.
- Timely notification of all significant events relevant to the implementation of the funded project.
- Provide public relations information to the funding agency.
- Establishing the visibility of the funding agency and the province of Lower Austria as the funding agency in web presences, publications and events related to the funded activity (the use of the logos and funding information is regulated in the project contract).
- Observance of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), the [United Nations \(UN\) Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) and the further strategic embedding of the [RTI Strategy Lower Austria 2021 - 2027](#).

9. DISCONTINUATION AND RECOVERY OF FUNDING

With regard to reduction, evaluation and recovery of funding, the provisions according to §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 recovery and discontinuation of the funding: The composition of the project consortium has been changed without the explicit approval of the funding agency or essential 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).

II. LEGAL BASIS

- [Lower Austrian Cultural Promotion Act 1996](#)
- [Guidelines for Funding under the Lower Austrian Cultural Promotion Act 1996 in the Field of Science, Research and Tertiary Education](#)

No legal claim to the granting of a funding arises from the legal bases and the call document. The place of jurisdiction for all disputes arising from the granting of a funding is the Regional Court of St. Pölten.

This call document comes into force on **30.03.2026** and applies to funding applications in the call "**RTI Projects 2026: Basic Research.**" Amendments and the current version will be published on the GFF website (<https://calls.einreichsystem.at/>).