

RTI-ENDOWED PROFESSORSHIPS 2025

FIELD OF ACTION:

DIGITALIZATION, INTELLIGENT PRODUCTION AND MATERIALS

TOPIC:

**ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE RTI-PRIORITY AREA ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE &
RESOURCES**

DATE: MAY 19, 2025

CALL DOCUMENT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I	INTRODUCTION	2
2	THEMATIC FOCUS	3
3	OBJECTIVES	3
4	SEQUENCE	4
5	REQUIREMENTS	5
6	FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK	6
7	REVIEW CRITERIA	7
8	OBLIGATIONS	8
9	SUSPENSION AND RECLAIM OF FUNDING	9
10	DATA PROTECTION	9
II	LEGAL BASIS	10

I INTRODUCTION

By awarding the **RTI-Endowed Professorship In 2025**, research structures and competencies at Lower Austrian colleges and universities will be strengthened and specific research topics will be sustainably established in the fields of action of the RTI Strategy Lower Austria 2027.

KEY POINTS:

RTI priority area	Digitalization, intelligent production and materials
Topic	Artificial Intelligence in the RTI priority area “Environment, climate & resources”
Funding volume	€1,500,000
Funding per project	€ 1,500,000 / 1 endowed professorship
Funding rate	Max. 90% of eligible costs
Project duration	5 or 6 years
Submission period	May 19, 2025 to October 3, 2025 (12 p.m.)
Submission platform	https://calls.einreichsystem.at/
Contact person	Dr. Florian Huber Call & program management P: +43 664 911 53 69 E: f.huber@gff-noe.at

2 THEMATIC FOCUS

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to the ability of computers or computer-controlled robots to perform certain tasks typically associated with human intelligence.¹ This involves a constructed or machine-based simulation of intelligence based on human capabilities.² Applications are based on **algorithms** that mimic functions normally attributed to the human brain.³ These functions include logical actions, the discovery of meaning, or the ability to generalize or learn from the past.⁴

Despite the immense **progress** in this area and the ongoing scaling and expansion of the speed and memory capacities of the executing computers, the programs still lack the **flexibility** of the human **brain**, have less **overview** of broader knowledge contexts and cannot apply **everyday knowledge** or **nuances** of social practices.⁵

The **RTI Endowed Professorship 2025** aims to address future innovation areas of artificial intelligence in the **RTI priority area “Environment, climate & resources.”**

The topics in this field of action include, among others, bioeconomy and the circular economy; sustainable energy systems and clean mobility; limiting the impacts of climate change and adapting to it; reducing emissions through decarbonization; resource conservation and energy efficiency; promoting the use of renewable raw materials as well as bio-based materials, products and process technology; sustainable land use; protection of water bodies; preservation of biodiversity; sustainable agriculture and smart farming.

The endowed professorship is intended to further develop the research domain through **new research and development approaches**. It is however essential to consider the **potentials** and **challenges**, taking into account **social** and **ethical** to address **risks**.

3 OBJECTIVES

This call for proposals supports the establishment and expansion of an endowed professorship. The RTI Endowed Professorship contributes to the following **objectives of the funding instrument**:

- Outstanding research and teaching are established and deepened.
- Knowledge transfer from research to teaching is encouraged and takes place actively.
- The international visibility of the research group and the profile of the RTI location will be increased.
- Dissemination, public relations and science communication are carried out in a targeted and sustainable manner.
- Institutional cooperation is being expanded and deepened.
- The endowed professorship contributes to solving social, economic, ecological and/or technological challenges.

¹ <https://hai.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/2023-03/AI-Key-Terms-Glossary-Definition.pdf>

² <https://ki.thws.de/thematik/starke-vs-schwache-ki-eine-definition/>

³ <https://www.heise.de/ratgeber/Kuenstliche-Intelligenz-Was-steckt-hinter-dem-Hype-7192364.html>

⁴ <https://www.britannica.com/technology/artificial-intelligence>

⁵ <https://www.britannica.com/technology/artificial-intelligence>

- The topics of the endowed professorship will be sustainably established and anchored at a Lower Austrian institution.

4 SEQUENCE

4.1 SUBMISSION

RTI calls are time-limited calls for proposals within which funding applications can be submitted. The application language is English, and this applies to all parts of the application. Submissions are possible from **May 19, 2025**, to **October 3, 2025, at 12:00 PM** via the GFF submission system: <https://calls.einreichsystem.at/>

4.2 EX-ANTE EVALUATION

EVALUATION PROCEDURES AND PROJECT SELECTION

All applications submitted on time will first be reviewed by the GFF to ensure that they meet the formal criteria (see point 7.1) .

The GFF will assemble a jury of independent external experts (see "Review Guidelines"). Three expert reviews will be prepared for each project proposal based on the defined review criteria (see Section 7.2). In a concluding jury meeting, a funding recommendation will be made based on the expert reviews and the assessments of the jury members.

DECISION ON FUNDING

The GFF Supervisory Board decides on funding based on the jury's recommendation.

4.3 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 point 11).

PROJECT START

The **project** must start within twelve months of the signing of the funding agreement. In justified cases, this deadline may be extended after consultation with the GFF and by submitting a written (informal) application.

REPORTING

Three months after the start of the endowed professorship, a **research plan** covering the entire funding period will be submitted to the GFF through the GFF submission and reporting system.

The annual **reports** (based on a project year) are prepared and submitted by the funding recipients in the GFF submission and reporting system.

FUNDING RATES

The **funding rates** are paid out annually in advance, with 10% of the total funding amount being deducted from the last installment and paid out only after the final report has been reviewed.

COMPLETION

The project is formally completed after the final report has been submitted through the GFF submission and reporting system and after it has been reviewed and the final payment has been completed.

4.4 INTERIM AND EX-POST EVALUATION

In the third year of the endowed professorship, the funding agency will organize a progress review by a commissioned third party.

As part of an announced **ex-post evaluation** (audit), the funding agency or third parties commissioned by it will check the intended use of the funding funds with regard to their intended purpose.

5 REQUIREMENTS

5.1 ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS

- **The lead partner** can only be a university or a university of applied sciences located in Lower Austria.
 - The endowed professorship must be located at a location in Lower Austria.
 - Submission is limited to two proposals per lead partner.
- Cooperation (optional): **The project partner** can only be university, a university of applied sciences or non-university research institution located in Austria.

5.2 COOPERATION (OPTIONAL)

- Applications for the call can be submitted either by a single eligible institution (lead partner) or **optionally** as a cooperation (see 5.1).
- In the case of a cooperation, at least **50% of the funding** must be allocated at the **lead partner** and thus at a **location in Lower Austria**. The allocation of the project in Lower Austria has to be visible in all communication and dissemination activities.
- Before the project-start, a **consortium agreement**, which regulates the internal relationship of the cooperation, has to be submitted to the funding agency.
- Cooperation with or support from other (non-eligible) institutions (e.g. industrial partner) can be presented by **means of a letter of intent** (LOI).

5.3 COMPOSITION OF THE ENDOWED PROFESSORSHIP

The endowed professorship is made up of the endowed professor and the scientific/technical staff. The application must describe the planned structural composition of the team and the planned appointment procedure of the endowed professor.

The endowed professor to be appointed must have a **completed PhD degree** followed by **least 5 years of relevant experience** in the field of research.

When appointing the endowed professorship and the scientific and technical staff, equal opportunities and diversity must be taken into account. The application must also describe which measures have

been taken or are planned by the participating institutions to ensure equal opportunities and diversity in their organisation.

5.4 USE OF FUNDS IN LOWER AUSTRIA

Since the funding is provided by the federal state of Lower Austria, the use of the majority of the funding in Lower Austria (>50%) is a basic condition. This also applies in the case of a cooperative RTI endowed professorship, where the eligible costs (see 6.4) – i.e. the personnel costs for the endowed professor as well as for the scientific or technical staff and the overheads – must be budgeted, documented and accounted for on a pro rata basis.

5.5 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 findings and research data. It builds on the two most important Open Science approaches: **Open Research Data** and **Open Access Publications (OA)**.

The endowed professorship requires reporting on compliance with the GFF Open Science Policy in the **interim** and **final reports**. This 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.

5.6 MISCELLANEOUS

A fully completed and signed proposal is a mandatory for the application to be considered in the evaluation process.

Failure to meet one or more of these requirements may lead to the exclusion of the proposal during the formal review and thus before the expert review.

6 FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

6.1 TYPE OF FUNDING

The funding is a grant. The maximum permissible funding intensity is up to **90% of the eligible costs**.⁷

6.2 DURATION

The duration of the funded project is either **5 or 6 years**. Cost-neutral project extensions are possible in justified cases and must be applied for separately at the funding agency (GFF).

6.3 AMOUNT OF FUNDING

The maximum funding for the project is € 1.500.000,--.

⁶ <https://calls.einreichsystem.at/upload/20240726-gff-open-science-policy-en-1.00.pdf>

⁷ The funding rate may also be lower, depending on the amount of the requested costs (e.g., requested costs = €1,800,000; maximum funding amount = €1,500,000; funding rate = 83%).

6.4 ELIGIBLE COSTS

In accordance with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness, expenditure is only eligible for funding to the extent that its nature and amount are necessary and appropriate to achieve the purpose of the funding. Inappropriate calculations can be a reason for rejection despite the excellence of the funding application. Costs in the following categories are **eligible**:

PERSONNEL COSTS

- Direct personnel costs of the **endowed professor**
 - The actual personnel costs are subsidized by the maximum contribution basis without a cap.
- Direct personnel costs for **academic and technical staff**
 - The calculation of eligible personnel costs is based on the planned or actual gross personnel costs plus a lump sum of 30% for ancillary wage costs (AWC).
 - The actual personnel costs are subsidized up to the maximum contribution basis determined annually by the responsible Federal Ministry (*Example: maximum contribution base 2025 = € 6.450 / month; max. eligible personnel costs per person = € 6.450 x 14 = € 90.300,- (excl. ACW)*)

OVERHEADS

- **Overheads** can only be funded as a lump sum of 25% on the eligible direct and project-relevant personnel costs.
- The overheads cover, among other things:
 - Rental and operating costs
 - Office supplies
 - Administrative staff costs
 - Material costs and other costs, such as test and consumables (up to the limit of low-value assets)

6.5 COST ACCOUNTING

The intended use of the funding must be recorded in the reporting system (see GFF [Cost Guide](#)) and in financial audits and interim evaluation by third parties (financial controls).

As part of the reporting system, this proof is provided by structured cost center statements or document lists. As part of the financial audit, cost center statements or document lists are checked on the basis of these.

7 REVIEW CRITERIA

7.1 FORMAL REVIEW

- Completeness of the application
- Fulfilment of the requirements under point 5

- Fulfilment of the financial framework under point 6

7.2 EXPERT REVIEW

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

The maximum number of points for an assessment is 15 points. The actual score 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 each. The points for the main criteria are calculated from the arithmetic average 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
 - Relevance and international connectivity
 - Connectivity to existing fields of strength
- **Implementation [K2]**
 - Quality and efficiency concept
 - Financial and resource planning
 - Institutional framework
 - Structure of the team and quality of the appointment procedure
- **Impact [K3]**
 - Effect on the research location
 - Effect on the educational location
 - Societal / economic / ecological / technological impact

8 OBLIGATIONS

The funding recipients are obliged to **observe** the following points:

- Economical, economical, expedient and transparent use of funds.
- Keeping separate and comprehensive records to prove the implementation of the funded project and retaining the records and receipts during and at least for ten years after the end of the project, unless there are any further legal provisions.
- Keeping an adequate accounting system.
- Submission of appropriate interim and final reports to the funding agency, in accordance with the timetable and reporting structure submitted by it.

- Enabling audits and evaluations by the funding agency and third parties commissioned by it, as well as an obligation to provide relevant information in the context of the interim and ex-post evaluations.
- Timely reporting of all important 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 province of Lower Austria as a funding provider for websites, publications and events in connection with the funded activity (the use of the logos and the funding acknowledgement is regulated in the project contract).
- Compliance with the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\) of the United Nations \(UN\)](#) and the further strategic embedding of the [RTI Strategy Lower Austria 2021 – 2027](#).

9 SUSPENSION AND RECLAIM OF FUNDING

With regard to the reduction, evaluation and reclaim of funding, the provisions of §13 of [the Guidelines for Funding under the Lower Austrian Cultural Promotion Act 1996 in the area of science, research and tertiary education](#) apply.

In addition, the following points can lead to a suspension and reclaim of the funding:

- The project was not started in time within one year of the signature of the funding agreement without the consent of the funding body.
- The purpose or composition of the endowed professorship has been changed without the express approval of the funding agency.

10 DATA PROTECTION

10.1 CONTROLLER UNDER THE GDPR

The Gesellschaft für Forschungsförderung Niederösterreich M.B.H., A-3100 St. Pölten, Hypogasse 1, 1st floor, T: +43 2742 27570-0, E: office@gff-noe.at (GFF) is responsible for the processing of your personal data in connection with your funding application in accordance with Article 7 (7) GDPR.

10.2 PURPOSE AND LEGAL BASIS OF DATA PROCESSING

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

The legal basis for this data processing is the performance of the contract in accordance with Art. 6 (1) (b) GDPR so that GFF can process and fulfill your funding application.

10.3 STORAGE PERIOD

GFF will store your personal data until your funding application has been fully processed (from submission to termination of the funding agreement, including any necessary data transfer to the Province of Lower Austria, external experts and examiners, insofar as this is necessary to fulfil the funding application).

In addition, GFF will only store your personal data to the extent necessary to comply with statutory retention obligations or to pursue or defend against legal claims.

10.4 DATA RECIPIENTS

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

- Province of Lower Austria
- External reviewers
- External examiners

In addition, GFF uses 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 perform services for us. GFF contractually obliges these processors to ensure the confidentiality and security of the personal data processed in the context of the order.

10.5 YOUR RIGHTS UNDER THE GDPR

You have the following rights vis-à-vis GFF as a controller under the GDPR: (i) information (Art. 15 GDPR); (ii) rectification (Art. 16 GDPR); (iii) erasure (Art. 17 GDPR); (iv) restriction of processing (Art. 18 GDPR); (v) objection (Art. 21 GDPR); (vi) data portability (Art. 20 GDPR); (vii) Complaint to the competent supervisory authority (Art. 77 GDPR), whereby in Austria the data protection authority (www.dsb.gv.at) is competent.

II LEGAL BASIS

- [Lower Austrian Cultural Promotion Act 1996](#)
- [Guidelines for funding under the Lower Austrian Cultural Promotion Act 1996 in the area of science, research and tertiary education](#)

The legal basis and the call document do not give rise to a legal entitlement to the granting of funding. The place of jurisdiction in all disputes arising from the granting of funding is the Regional Court of St. Pölten.

This call document will come into force on **May 19, 2025** and applies to funding applications in the call "**RTI Endowed Professorships 2025**". Changes and any updated versions will be published on the website of the GFF submission and reporting system (<https://calls.einreichsystem.at/>).