

RTI PROJECTS 2021: BASIC RESEARCH
- PUBLIC HEALTH
- SOCIAL COHESION IN TRANSITION

CALL DOCUMENT

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INTRODUCTION

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

The fields of action of the RTI Strategy Lower Austria 2027 are:

- i. Health and nutrition
- ii. Environment, climate and resources
- iii. Digitalisation, smart production and materials
- iv. Society and culture

The targeted development of research competencies in Lower Austria contributes to the profile of Lower Austria as a research hub and promotes excellent and internationally visible research. The Lower Austrian colleges, universities and non-university research institutions are thus also supported in participating successfully in calls for proposals for existing national and international research funding programmes and in entering into increased cooperation with international partners.

The networking of various research institutions in project consortia is an important aspect in ensuring the dynamic development of Lower Austria as an RTI hub. Here, the focus is increasingly on inter- and transdisciplinary cooperation and the formation of new consortia.

In order to stimulate participatory research methods and projects at Lower Austrian science and research institutions, there is the possibility of active cooperation between citizens and scientists in research projects within the framework of so-called Citizen Science Add-ons. This enables a knowledge transfer in both directions and provides new impulses for research.

Submission of basic research projects in two thematically different calls is possible from 12.7.2021 to 15.10.2021, 12 noon.

I. THEMATIC ORIENTATION

Funding applications can be submitted for **two thematically different calls**, whereby the following provisions apply equally to both.

i. **Public health**

"Public health" deals with the health of the population, in particular with the prevention of diseases, the promotion of health and the prolongation of life. This subject area is strongly interdisciplinary. The topic of the call particularly includes the following focal points:

- Health promotion and prevention
- Health services research
- Digitalisation and innovation in the health sector

Health promotion and prevention: This focus deals with the maintenance and promotion of health as well as the prevention of diseases. This includes all areas of health, explicitly also psychosocial aspects.

Health services research: Projects can be submitted to this priority area that deal with questions of health care, specifically with organisation, management and financing. The main focus is located at the interface of clinical, psychological, social, economic and legal research.

Digitalisation and innovation in the health sector: The focus here is on digital transformation as well as innovations in the field of public health.

ii. **Social cohesion in transition**

Social cohesion is an urgent challenge in view of the increasing polarisation and division of society as well as current social crises. The topic is taken up with the call "Social cohesion in transition," focusing in particular on the following priorities:

- Social inclusion, cohesion and resilience
- Impacts of globalisation and digitalisation
- Identity and cultural heritage

Social inclusion, cohesion and resilience: This focus deals with all aspects of social inequality, marginalisation, discrimination and radicalisation, or their counterparts, inclusion and social cohesion. Social resilience, in turn, deals with the question of societies' capacity for resistance and regeneration in the face of crises and disruptions.

Impacts of globalisation and digitalisation: The focus here is on the diverse impacts of accelerated societal, socio-economic and cultural change through globalisation and digitalisation in connection with societal and social cohesion. Examples include polarisation and social fragmentation through echo chambers in social networks or impacts on the working and living environment of the population.

Identity and cultural heritage: Dealing with cultural heritage as well as art, culture and creative industries are driving forces for a sense of cultural belonging and for social

cohesion. This focus therefore addresses all aspects of cultural identity and heritage and their impact on stabilising or destabilising societies.

2. CITIZEN SCIENCE ADD-ON

If the scientific participation of citizens (Citizen Science) is planned in a project proposal, a so-called Citizen Science Add-on can be applied for. For a Citizen Science Add-on, additional funding of up to € 100,000 can be applied for in a project proposal. (see 6.iii)

The scientific participation of citizens can take place in one or more of the following ways:

- Involvement of citizens in data analysis, interpretation, extraction and/or processing
- Involving citizens in the further development of methods, instruments and/or products
- Involvement of citizens in problem definition, development of research questions and/or quality criteria

The application must present the scientific participation of citizens in a comprehensible way. According to this understanding, the exclusive involvement of citizens as study participants is not sufficient for a funding application with Citizen Science Add-on and a reason for rejection of the funding application.

3. GOALS

The projects should contribute to the following goals:

- Expansion of research competences 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 goal is the joint scientific treatment of a problem by the project partners.
- Contributing to innovation and solving societal challenges**
- in projects with Citizen Science Add-on: two-way knowledge transfer between science and the population**

4. PROCEDURE

i. Submission

RTI calls are thematic calls for a limited period of time in which funding proposals can be submitted. Submissions are made via the GFF submission system. The proposals must be presented in English. The submission of basic research projects is possible from **12.7.2021 to 15.10.2021, 12 noon**.

ii. Ex-ante evaluation

- Evaluation procedure and project selection
 - All applications submitted on time will first undergo an internal formal review by the GFF.
 - The GFF assembles a jury of at least five independent external experts in the respective thematic area of the call. Attention will be paid to a gender balance as far as possible.

- The peer-review is carried out by the jury members and/or additional independent external experts selected by the GFF. A total of 2-3 expert reports are prepared for each project application.
- In the final jury session, the project selection is made on the basis of the expert opinions.

- Decision on project selection and funding

The GFF Supervisory Board decides on project selection and funding.

- Funding agreement

According to the resolution of the GFF Supervisory Board, the funding agreement between GFF and the funding recipient is concluded on the basis of the guidelines for funding under the Lower Austrian Cultural Promotion Act 1996.

iii. Funding period

- Project start

The projects should begin no later than six months after the funding commitment has been signed. In justified exceptional cases (e.g. maternity leave), this deadline can be extended upon request.

- Reporting

The annual reports can be prepared and submitted by the funding recipients in the GFF submission system.

- Funding rates

Funding instalments are paid annually in advance, with 10% of the total funding amount being withheld until after the final report has been reviewed.

- Closing

The formal conclusion of the funding takes place through the preparation and submission of the final report by the funding recipients in the GFF submission system.

iv. 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 audit of the proper use of the funding.

5. REQUIREMENTS

i. Application Eligibility

- **Main applicants** can be universities, colleges and non-university research institutions located in Lower Austria. The institution that is responsible for the main part of the work programme must be the main applicant.

- Universities, non-university research institutions and other non-profit organisations located inside or outside Lower Austria can be involved as project partners within the framework of cooperations.
 - The vast majority of the funding must be used in Lower Austria ($\geq 75\%$).
- **Non-eligible institutions**
 - Organisations in direct majority ownership ($+50\%$) of the province of Lower Austria (with the exception of clinics and care facilities) are not eligible for funding but can make their own contribution.
 - Commercial enterprises can be involved in the project. However, their contribution is mandatory and cannot be funded. For the purposes of this call for proposals, enterprises are commercial or freelance economic units that carry out an independent, organised, profit-oriented economic activity aimed at the production or provision of services as well as a permanent economic activity.

ii. Cooperations

- At least two independent colleges, universities or non-university research institutions must be involved in the project.
- Max. 75% of the funding may be used at one institution.

iii. Composition of the project team

Project teams must be composed in such a way that young scientists are given the opportunity to advance their scientific careers. However, the appropriate participation of experienced researchers (who do not fulfil the above criteria) in projects is essential in order to bring in their experience and knowledge and to guide and support the young researchers.

- Participation of young scientists

Young researchers are scientific project partners and staff members

- who were born after 31.12.1986 or
- who completed their PhD studies after 31.12.2015 or
- who have completed their specialist medical training after 31.12.2015.

Parental leave periods are taken into account positively.

- Participation of senior scientists

The absolute minimum participation of a senior researcher as a partner is 5% full-time equivalent over the entire project duration. Higher levels of participation are expressly desired. This work is recognised as in-kind contribution.

- Gender-sensitive composition of the project team

Equal opportunities between female and male scientists in their participation in research projects are a prerequisite for the approval of funding. This equal opportunity should, as far as possible, be reflected in a balanced gender distribution within the project teams. The project

proposal must describe the measures taken by the participating institutions to ensure this equal opportunity in their organisation.

iv. **Other**

- A fully completed project application signed by the applicant consortium is a basic requirement for a positive funding decision.
- If a positive ethical vote is required for the project, this must be presented accordingly in the application. In the case of funding, the ethics vote must be submitted by the start of the project. In justified exceptional cases, a later submission is possible.
- Letters of support (LOIs) can be submitted as part of the project application.

Failure to meet one or more of the requirements may lead to the exclusion of the project proposal even before the peer-review.

6. FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS

i. **Type of funding**

The funding is a grant. Eligible costs up to the maximum funding amount (see 6.iii) are 100% eligible for funding. However, an additional contribution of at least 10% of the subsidised / eligible costs in the project is required. This results in a funding rate of up to 90.9% based on the total costs.

ii. **Duration**

The duration of the funded projects should not be shorter than two and not longer than three years. Cost-neutral project extensions are possible in justified exceptional cases.

iii. **Amount of the subsidy**

The maximum funding amount is up to € 300,000 depending on the duration. For projects with Citizen Science Add-on, up to € 100,000 can also be funded for costs related to Citizen Science.

- With a project duration of 3 years: up to € 300,000 (with Citizen Science Add-on: up to € 400,000)
- With 2.5 years: up to € 250,000 (with Citizen Science Add-on: up to € 350,000)
- With 2 years: up to € 200,000 (with Citizen Science Add-on: up to € 300,000)

iv. **Use of funds in Lower Austria**

As the funding is provided by the province of Lower Austria, a predominant use of the funding in Lower Austria ($\geq 75\%$) is a basic prerequisite for funding.

v. **Eligible 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 type and amount to achieve the purpose of the funding.

Inappropriate calculations can be a reason for rejection despite the excellence of the project proposal's content.

Costs in the following categories are eligible:

- Direct personnel costs for young researchers

This includes scientific / technical project staff and partners who were born after 31.12.1986, or who completed their PhD studies after 31.12.2015, or who completed their specialist medical training after 31.12.2015.¹

- The application and settlement is based on the planned or actual gross personnel costs plus a flat rate for ancillary wage costs of 30%.
- An hourly divisor of 1720 is to be applied.
- The maximum eligible personnel costs per person are capped at the maximum contribution base set annually by the competent Federal Ministry.
Example: Maximum contribution basis 2021 = € 5,500 / month
Max. eligible personnel costs per person = €5,500 x 14 x 1.3 = € 100,100

- Material costs (low-value assets) and other costs

- Experimental and consumable material
- Publications and other dissemination
- Representation and event participation
- Travel expenses
- Fees for study participants
- Fees for scientifically involved citizens (for Citizen Science Add-on)
- Investments and depreciation (AfA) are not eligible.

- Third-party services

- max. 5% of the eligible costs
- Project partners cannot provide third-party services in the project.

- An overhead of up to 25% of the direct eligible personnel costs covers costs not directly attributable to the project as a lump sum. These are for example:

- Rental costs
- Operating costs
- Office supplies
- Maintenance
- Administrative staff costs

vi. In-kind contribution

In addition to the eligible costs, 10% of in-kind contribution must be made to the project. This contribution can also be made in the form of non-eligible costs. The work of senior scientists in projects is recognised as in-kind contribution. The maximum personnel costs are capped at the maximum contribution basis set annually by the responsible Federal Ministry. (cf. 6.v: eligible costs)

¹ Personnel costs that do not fall into this category (senior scientists) can be submitted and accounted for as personal work.

vii. **Cost accounting**

The proper use of the funding must be proven in the reporting system and, if necessary, in so-called financial audits. Within the framework of reporting, this proof is provided by means of structured cost centre statements or lists of receipts. Within the framework of the financial audit, these cost centre statements or lists of receipts are used as the basis for the audit.

7. EVALUATION CRITERIA

i. **Formal review**

- i. Completeness of the application
- ii. Fulfilment of the requirements under point 5
- iii. Fulfilment of the financial framework conditions under point 6

ii. **Expert opinion**

The evaluation is carried out on the basis of a point system by jury members and/or external independent experts (for evaluation procedure see 4.ii). There are three main criteria (K1-3), each with five sub-criteria. Up to 5 points can be awarded per sub-criterion. The points for the main criteria result from the arithmetic mean of the sub-criteria. The more points awarded, the better the rating.

- **Excellence [K1]**
 - Originality and innovation [K1.1]
 - Expected gain in knowledge and scientific significance [K1.2]
 - Clear working hypotheses and relevance of the objective [K1.3]
 - Appropriateness of methods [K1.4]
 - Sensible delimitation of the topic [K1.5]
- **Quality and efficiency of the planned implementation [K2]**
 - Quality and efficiency of the work programme [K2.1]
 - Feasibility (including consideration of any risks) within the overall timeframe designed [K2.2]
 - Appropriate financial and resource planning [K2.3]
 - Infrastructural framework conditions of the institutions involved [K2.4]
 - Composition and qualification of the project team (also in connection with career development of young scientists, participation of senior scientists and gender-sensitive composition of the project team) [K2.5]
- **Impact [K3]**
 - Scientific impact
 - Sustainable expansion of the research competence of the participating institutions [K3.1]
 - Increase the visibility and profile of the locations of the participating institutions [K3.2]
 - Expansion of cooperation between the institutions involved [K3.3]

- Social impact
 - Contribution to innovation and solution of societal challenges [K3.4]
 - In projects with Citizen Science Add-on: two-way knowledge transfer between science and the population [K3.5]

8. OBLIGATIONS OF THE APPLICANT

The main applicants and partners involved are obliged to observe the following points:

- i. Economic, economical, appropriate and transparent use of funds with the diligence of a prudent entrepreneur.
- ii. Keep separate and comprehensive records to demonstrate the implementation of the funded project. Secure storage of records and supporting documents during and for at least seven years after the end of the project, unless there is a legal requirement to longer periods.
- iii. Management of an adequate accounting system.
- iv. Write and submit appropriate interim and final reports to the funding agency, according to the reporting structure provided by the reporting system.
- v. Enabling audits and evaluations by the funding agency and third parties commissioned by it, as well as the obligation to provide corresponding information.
- vi. Timely reporting of all important events relevant to the implementation of the funded project.
- vii. Provision of information for the public relations work of the funding agency.
- viii. Mention of the funding agency and the province of Lower Austria as funding provider in publications and events in connection with the funded activity.
- ix. Respect for human dignity and fundamental human rights, especially in the areas of anti-discrimination, gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting, climate protection and sustainability.

9. DISCONTINUATION AND RECOVERY OF FUNDING

Decisions on the discontinuation and reclaiming of funding are made by the funding agency within the framework of the conditions specified in the respective funding agreement and in this document in the form of a written request to the main applicant. The following points in particular apply as grounds for discontinuation and reclaiming funding:

- i. The subsidised costs (not the own contribution) are additionally subsidised in whole or in part by the public sector (EU, federal government, state) or a non-profit foundation (double subsidisation).
- ii. The funding agency or third parties commissioned by it have been informed incorrectly or incompletely about material circumstances or a reporting obligation has been violated.
- iii. Despite previous written reminders, the required reports and evidence were not provided or the required information was not provided.
- iv. Intended control measures were prevented or impeded, or retention obligations were violated.
- v. The subsidies were used in whole or in part contrary to their intended purpose.
- vi. The project was not started on time within six months of the funding approval without the approval of the funding agency.

- vii. Bankruptcy proceedings are instituted against the assets of the main applicant before completion of the funded project or within a period of three years after its completion, or the opening of bankruptcy proceedings is refused due to lack of assets to cover costs, or the operation of the applicant institution is permanently discontinued within this period.

Unless otherwise determined by the funding agency, repayments shall be made at an interest rate of 2% above the applicable 12-month EURIBOR.²

IO. DATA PROTECTION

Your personal data will be processed as necessary for the duration of the entire business relationship (from the submission to the termination of a funding contract, including any necessary data transfer to the Province of Lower Austria as the funding provider, external reviewers, jurors and examiners) as well as beyond that in accordance with the statutory retention and documentation obligations within the framework of the currently applicable Austrian Data Protection Act (DSG) and the European Data Protection Regulation (DSGVO).

II. LEGAL BASIS

- **NÖ Kulturförderungsgesetz 1996**
https://www.noel.gv.at/noe/Wissenschaft-Forschung/NOE_Kulturfoerderungsgesetz_1996.pdf
- **Richtlinien für die Förderung nach dem NÖ Kulturförderungsgesetz 1996**
https://www.noel.gv.at/noe/Wissenschaft-Forschung/Richtlinien_zum_No_Kulturfoerderungsgesetz_1996.pdf

These guidelines and the call document do not constitute a legal entitlement to the granting of funding, neither in terms of the reason nor in terms of the amount.

The place of jurisdiction for all disputes arising from the granting of a subsidy is the Regional Court of St. Pölten.

This call document comes into force on 12.07.2021 and applies to funding applications in the call "RTI Projects 2021: Basic Research". Amendments and the current version will be published on the GFF website (www.gff-noe.at).

² If the 12-month EURIBOR is negative, an interest rate of 2% p.a. applies.