

RTI-CITIZEN-SCIENCE 2023

CALL DOCUMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Current studies on attitudes towards science in Austria show that around 30% of those questioned have little trust in science.¹ According to these studies, one reason for this widespread **scientific skepticism** might be that there is little direct contact between researchers and the general public.

The call RTI-Citizen-Science 2023 builds on this problem by focusing on the comprehensive **participation of citizen scientists** in research projects and thus on the in-depth **exchange** between science and the general public.

The **citizen science approach**² aims to actively involve citizen scientists in the scientific activities in the course of which new knowledge is generated.³ However, according to the **European Citizen Science Association (ECSA)**, citizen science is understood as a flexible concept that can be adapted to different circumstances and disciplines.

Since a uniform definition of citizen science does not appear to be very effective due to the various inter- and transdisciplinary approaches and methodological variations, the ECSA has agreed on **10 basic principles of citizen science** in order to characterize this approach and make it usable for research practice.⁴

On the basis of the basic principles, the "**Österreich forscht**" network also developed a set of twenty **quality criteria** for citizen science projects.⁵ These criteria represent both a substantial basis for the conception of citizen science projects and a basis for the classification and evaluation of citizen science projects.

As part of several EU projects, the online platform **EU-Citizen.Science** was also developed by ECSA together with other partner organizations, where knowledge, tools, training and other resources for the planning and implementation of citizen science projects are available.⁶

In order to stimulate participatory research methods and projects, the call **RTI-Citizen-Science** will be published for the first time in 2023 on the basis of these concepts and principles and against the background of the **RTI Strategy of Lower Austria 2027**. The funding instrument is intended to enable a dialogue between science and society as well as a transfer of knowledge in both directions in the sense of the paradigm of open science (open science). In addition to the impulses for science through cooperative research and the generation of new findings, science also benefits from direct discussion and thus from feedback on the practical relevance of their work. Conversely, citizen science projects are intended to encourage curiosity and interest in science and research among the population, which in turn can cushion widespread skepticism about science.

The call "RTI-Citizen-Science 2023" (FTI23-C) is open to all fields of action of the RTI Strategy of Lower Austria 2027.

A total budget of **€1,800,000** is available as a funding volume for this call.

In this tender document you will find details on the thematic orientation, goals, procedure, framework conditions, budget, evaluation criteria, funding conditions, data protection and legal basis.

Citizen science projects can be submitted from June 1st, 2023 to September 29th, 2023, 12 noon.

¹ Eurobarometer (2021): <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2237>; OEAW (2022): [Wissenschaftsbarometer Österreich 2022](#)

² Citizen Scientists might be people of different age (including children and young people), gender and social background as well as people with specialized knowledge or expertise (knowledge communities).

³ Katrin Vohland, Anne Land-Zandstra, Luigi Ceccaroni, Rob Lemmens, Josep Perelló, Marisa Ponti, Roeland Samson, Katherin Wagenknecht (2021): The Science of Citizen Science. Springer: <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/978-3-030-58278-4.pdf>

⁴ ECSA (2015): Ten Principles of Citizen Science. Berlin. <https://zenodo.org/record/5127534#.Y8IDxD3MKUI>

⁵ <https://zenodo.org/record/3648636#.ZFtdS3ZByUk>

⁶ See also „[Top Citizen Science](#)“ (FWF) or „[Sparkling Science](#)“ (OeaD)

I. THEMATIC FOCUS

Funding applications for citizen science projects can be submitted for **all fields of action of the RTI Strategy Lower Austria 2027**. The fields of action of the RTI Strategy Lower Austria 2027 include:

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

The scientific need for the comprehensive participation of citizen scientists⁷ in the processing of the research topics must be presented in the application in a comprehensible manner. Citizen scientists are expected to participate **in all project phases** (see also the criteria for the pre-review *under 6.ii*):

- Initial phase: Involving the citizen scientists in one or more participatory workshops or meetings (e.g.: to integrate non-academic knowledge or the expertise of the citizen scientists into the project; to coordinate the research approaches, assumptions and/or hypotheses; for the operationalization or specification of methods, concepts, and/or instruments, etc.),
- Implementation phase: Involvement of citizen scientists in data collection, processing, analysis and/or interpretation,
- Final phase: involvement of the citizen scientists in the dissemination of the project results and/or communication about the project.

The relevance of the Citizen Science approach for the project results from whether the research question could be answered without the participation of Citizen Scientists and from the explanation of which scientific findings can be gained through the participation of Citizen Scientists. These aspects are essential for the evaluation of the applications.

The involvement of Citizen Scientists solely as a “research object” or as a “data source” (e.g. only as test persons or as participants in surveys etc.) therefore does not correspond to the orientation and objectives of this call. Corresponding applications will therefore not be funded in this call.

2. OBJECTIVES

Projects should make contributions to the following objectives:

- Mutual knowledge transfer between science and population
- Sustainable implementation of citizen science in society and science as well as contribution to innovations and solution of social challenges
- Expansion of research competencies in Lower Austria in the addressed topic and increasing the visibility and profile of the location
- Expansion of cooperation between the participating institutions

⁷ Citizen Scientists might be people of different age (including children and young people), gender and social background as well as people with specialized knowledge or expertise (knowledge communities).

3. PROCEDURES

i. Submission

RTI calls are time-limited calls in which funding applications can be submitted. Submissions are made via the GFF submission system (calls.einreichsystem.at).

The application language (of all parts of the proposal) is English.⁸ Submission is possible from **01.06.2023 to 29.09.2023, 12.00 (noon)**.

ii. Ex-ante evaluation

- *Evaluation procedure and project selection*

All applications submitted by the deadline will first be reviewed by GFF to ensure that they meet the formal criteria.

After the formal review, the proposals are reviewed by an independent external citizen science expert as part of a preliminary assessment to determine whether the intended projects meet the criteria for citizen science projects.

The GFF assembles a jury of independent external experts (see "Application Guide"). For each project application, at least two expert reviews are prepared on the basis of the defined evaluation criteria. In a final jury meeting, a proposal for funding is prepared on the basis of the expert reviews.

- *Funding decision*

The supervisory board of GFF decides on the funding.

- *Grant agreement*

The grant agreement is concluded between GFF and the recipient on the basis of the legal basis applicable to this call.

iii. Funding period

- *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.

- *Reporting*

The annual reports are prepared and submitted by the grantees in the GFF submission system (calls.einreichsystem.at).

⁸ The application language (English) ensures the option of having expert reviews by international scientific experts. A German-language application can only be approved in exceptional cases and exclusively for proposals from linguistics or literature research, provided that predominantly German texts are being processed. In case it is intended to submit a proposal in German, the funding agency has to be consulted and a scientific abstract of the project including a (scientific) justification for the need to use German as the main language has to be submitted. The final decision is up to the funding agency.

- *Funding rates*

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

- *Project completion*

The formal conclusion of the funding includes the submission of the final report by the project consortium (calls.einreichsystem.at), the evaluation of the report and the transfer of the final payment.

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

4. REQUIREMENTS

i. 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 and non-university research institutions as well as non-profit organizations, schools, educational institutions and municipalities 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, schools and care institutions);
- Companies in the commercial sector.⁹

ii. Cooperations

- At least two institutions have to be involved in the project.
- Max. 80% of the grant funds may be used at one institution.
- In the case of funding, it is recommended by the GFF to set up a consortium agreement between the project partners before the start of the project for defining the rules of the cooperation.
- Collaborations with non-funded institutions are possible by means of a Letter of Intent (LOI).

⁹ For the purposes of this call, companies are defined as commercial or freelance economic units that carry out a production or provision of services as well as a long-term, independent, organized, profit-oriented economic activity.

iii. **Use of funding in Lower Austria**

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

iv. **Project-team**

- *Integration of Citizen Scientists*

The proposal has to present the comprehensive scientific integration of the citizen scientists into the project as this is essential for the evaluation.

- *Equal opportunities*

Equal opportunity is 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 application must also describe which measures have been taken or are planned by the participating institutions to ensure this equal opportunity in their organization.

v. **Further**

A fully completed and signed grant application is a basic requirement for the application to be considered in the evaluation process.

Failure to meet one or more of these requirements may result in a disqualification of the proposal as a result of the formal review.

5. FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

i. **Type of funding**

The funding is a grant. The funding intensity is up to **90% of the eligible costs**.¹⁰

ii. **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).

iii. **Amount of funding**

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

Gradation

- 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

¹⁰ The funding rate is dynamic and actually depends on the calculated costs of the project (example: calculated costs of the project = € 500.000; max. funding = € 360.000; funding rate = 72%).

iv. 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.

Costs in the following categories are **eligible** if they are relevant to the project:

- **Personnel costs for scientific / technical staff¹¹:**

- 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 maximum eligible personnel costs per person are capped at the maximum contribution base set annually by the responsible federal ministry.

Example: maximum contribution base 2023 = € 5.850 / month; max. eligible personnel costs per person = €5.850 x 14 = € 81.900,- (excl. ACW)

- **Material costs and other costs** (up to the limit of low-value assets):

- Test and consumable material
- Costs for publications in connection with the project
- Event costs and participation fees
- Travel expenses
- Fees for study participants
- Allowances for citizens
- Other direct costs

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

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

- **Overhead costs** are eligible only as a flat rate of 25% on eligible personnel costs, material costs and other direct costs (but not 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

¹¹ Only people who actually contribute quantifiable work and for whom personnel costs are applied for can be created as project partners and employees.

Costs in the following categories are **not eligible**:

- 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
- Depreciation for wear and tear
- Costs for machine use

v. **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. REVIEW CRITERIA

i. **Formal review**

- Completeness of the application
- Fulfillment of the requirements under point 4
- Fulfillment of the financial framework under point 5

ii. **Pre-Review**

- Citizen scientists are expected to participate **in all project phases**:
 - o Initial phase: Involving the citizen scientists in one or more participatory workshops or meetings (e.g.: to integrate non-academic knowledge or the expertise of the citizen scientists into the project; to coordinate the research approaches, assumptions and/or hypotheses; for the operationalization or specification of methods, concepts, and/or instruments, etc.),
 - o Implementation phase: Involvement of citizen scientists in data collection, processing, analysis and/or interpretation,
 - o Final phase: involvement of the citizen scientists in the dissemination of the project results and/or communication about the project.
- The involvement of Citizen Scientists solely as a “research object” or as a “data source” (e.g. only as test persons or as participants in surveys etc.) therefore does not correspond to the orientation and objectives of this call. Corresponding applications will therefore not be funded in this call.

iii. Expert Review

The evaluation is carried out on the basis of a point system by external independent experts (see 3.ii). 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
 - International relevance
- **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 location
 - Social / economic / ecological / technological impact
 - Two-way knowledge transfer between society and science

7. OBLIGATIONS

Grantees are required to comply with the following:

- i. Economic, economical, appropriate and transparent use of funds.
- ii. 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.
- iii. Maintenance of an adequate accounting system.
- iv. Submission of appropriate interim and final reports to the funding agency, in accordance with the schedule and reporting structure provided by the funding agency.
- v. 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.
- vi. Timely notification of all significant events relevant to the implementation of the funded project.
- vii. Provide public relations information to the funding agency.

- viii. 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).
- ix. 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](#).

8. DISCONTINUATION AND RECOVERY

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. .

Furthermore, a change in the composition of the project consortium without the explicit approval of the funding agency or if essential partners are no longer part of the consortium can also lead to a complete recovery and discontinuation of the funding.

9. DATA PROTECTION

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).

10. 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 **01.06.2023** and applies to funding applications in the call "**RTI-Citizen-Science 2023**" Amendments and the current version will be published on the GFF website (www.gff-noe.at).