Scope of the call

> This call is issued within the WWTF "Additional Measures" (“Ergänzende Instrumente”) specified in the WWTF Funding Guideline.

This call is open to early-career ME/CFS researchers seeking to undertake a six-month research stay in Vienna, Lower Austria or abroad. The ME/CFS Fellowship programme aims to strengthen the ME/CFS community by supporting excellent young scientists and promoting the exchange of expertise. The programme provides a stipend for fellows to learn new methods and techniques in renowned laboratories in Vienna or abroad. The fellowship should help young researchers forge and strengthen international connections early in their career.

Why ME/CFS?

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis / Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS) is a complex and poorly understood chronic disease. As part of the family of post-acute infectious diseases, it is characterised by a wide range of complex and serious, debilitating conditions with a variety of symptoms. This includes the cardinal symptom post-exertional malaise. Other symptoms like sleep dysfunction, pain, neurological/cognitive manifestations, as well as autonomic, immunological, and neuro-endocrinological symptoms are part of ME/CFS. Individuals with ME/CFS often do not return to pre-disease levels of activity. The cause of ME/CFS is currently unknown. ME/CFS affects individuals of all ages, ethnicities, and socioeconomic groups. It is estimated that in Austria up to 80,000 patients suffer from ME/CFS, with women being more likely to be diagnosed than men.

The focus of this fellowship is on learning and exchange of techniques that advance the understanding of post-acute infectious diseases such as ME/CFS. However, grantees investigating other post-acute infectious diseases that show substantial post-exertional malaise in their phenotype are also eligible for funding. Please note that researchers solely addressing observational projects in clinical settings and health service research do not fit the scope of this call.

Phenotypic Characteristics

ME/CFS: The definition of ME/CFS must align with one or more of the following international consensus criteria:

- Canadian Consensus Criteria (CCC) or the revised CCC

- International Consensus Criteria
- NICE Guidelines for ME/CFS
- IOM 2015 Diagnostic Criteria

Post-acute infectious diseases (PAIS): Other post-acute infectious diseases may also be investigated as part of the proposed fellowship. Recent research has shown significant overlap in the biological mechanisms between a wide range of post-acute infectious diseases. Early career researchers investigating other post-acute infectious diseases (e.g., long COVID) are therefore also eligible to apply for this fellowship . To be included in the scope of this call, the disease to be studied must meet the phenotypic criteria of post-exertional malaise as defined by one of the above-mentioned international consensus criteria.

ME/CFS Fellowship: What we expect

Early career researchers who wish to apply in this call must either: 1) be currently based at a university or non-university research institution in Vienna or Lower Austria and seek to conduct a research stay outside of Austria; or 2) be currently based outside of Austria and seek to conduct a research stay at a university or non-university research institution in Vienna or Lower Austria.

The aim of this call is to strengthen the ME/CFS research community globally, with a particular focus on Vienna. Through the fellowships, early career researchers should:

- **Develop core research and technical skills:** Grantees should receive training in and acquire new skills relevant for ME/CFS research. This may include designing, performing, and interpreting experiments, mastering associated experimental techniques, and developing strong foundations in experimental design, statistical methodology, and/or quantitative / qualitative reasoning.
- **Contribute to strengthening of collaborations between research groups:** Grantees should benefit from and contribute to conducting research in different lab groups and cultures. Grantees are encouraged to engage in community activities to promote exchange and collaboration across ME/CFS labs.
- **Career development:** Grantees should continue to develop essential professional skills, such as critical thinking, project management, communication, organization, and the ability to work independently and as part of different teams. Applicants should also demonstrate how their research stay contribute to their career development.
- **Broader Impact and Scientific Engagement:** Grantees are encouraged to think beyond the lab bench and understand the broader impact of their ME/CFS research.

Important Technicalities

- **The overall duration is limited to 6 months.** If applicants must deviate from this timeframe, this must be indicated and strongly justified in the application. A fellowship duration of 6 months is strongly recommended.
- **Fellowships must start at latest in June, 2026.** This timeline for start of fellowships is mandatory.
- **The fellowship contrac**t will be signed between WWTF and the Viennese research institution of the outgoing/incoming grantee in accordance with WWTF's funding guidelines and role as local funder in Vienna. Fore more details, please see here. If you are outgoing/incoming from/to an institution based in Lower Austria, the contract will be signed between the State of Lower Austria and the outgoing/incoming grantee. For more details, please see here.
- **All applicants must submit a Letter of Intent (LOI)** from the host lab / working group: All applications must include a letter from the host group, with the following information:
  - The name of the applicant
  - The name of the responsible PI at the Host Institution
  - The timeframe of the research stay
  - The expected role of the applicant within the working group and
  - The Host Lab / Working group's approach to mentorship and guidance for the duration of the fellowship
  - Signature of the responsible PI of the Host Institution

Community Building

Funded fellows will participate in WWTF and WE&ME public relation activities to promote the outcomes of this call. This includes featuring research projects online, contributing to other multimedia activities and/or presentation of their research work at stakeholder meetings relevant. To strengthen the ME/CFS research community, funded fellows will also be invited to participate in further community-building activities.

Created 2025-08-07 13:59:56 UTC by Benjamin Missbach
Updated 2026-04-09 15:20:08 UTC by Magdalena Wicher