

ESS26 - Resilience and Crises / Call Specifications

This repository contains all the necessary information for the ESS26 - Resilience and Crises Project Call.

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ESS26 - Resilience and Crises / Scope of the Call

Introduction and general scope of the call

Societies are entering an era of increasing uncertainty where new crises emerge and familiar ones return in transformed, and probably even more damaging ways. There can be no return to the “good old times”: the past cannot be restored, nor the present preserved in its entirety. Yet many civilizational and democratic achievements remain worth safeguarding, even as crises demand new societal approaches and innovative solutions. In this context, resilience is not a fixed condition but an active practice—one that must be deliberately cultivated, continuously exercised, and critically refined. Social science research plays a crucial role in understanding these transformations and generating the knowledge, tools, and networks needed to strengthen societies’ capacity to respond, adapt, and thrive amidst uncertainty.

The objective of this call is to support exploratory, interdisciplinary research projects, led by social scientists, that advance the conceptualization of resilience in relation to selected crises—primarily with regard to their societal dimensions. Projects should initiate structured collaboration with other scientific disciplines and relevant practitioner communities, and employ methodological approaches capable of anticipating potential future crisis events.

This call is part of a two-phase funding activity. [Projects funded in phase one will be invited to submit a further project proposal for larger projects once the exploratory projects are concluded.](#)

Key Requirements

- The project’s Principal Investigator & Coordinator should come from the **social sciences** in a wide sense, as demonstrated by their scientific track record.
- Projects should address a crisis or a limited set of crises where strengthening societal resilience is crucial, and where the second phase of funding can be used to develop actionable and practical solutions with real-world impacts.
- The first funding phase's focus is on networking with other researchers and real-world practitioners, capacity building in terms of existing knowledge about crises and resilience phenomena as well as methodological approaches towards the chosen topic.
- With a view to the second funding phase, the crisis or crises should be selected in such a way that addressing them critically depends on the **generation of new scientific knowledge**, thereby ensuring that the project also results in scientific publications and academic theses.
- The chosen crisis/crises should be suitable for **collaboration with partners from other disciplines** and, in the second funding phase, also with **practitioner communities**.
 - Collaboration between at least two scientific disciplines is required to ensure an interdisciplinary approach.

- Projects should clearly demonstrate how they will engage with the societal context of their chosen crisis/crises and – as an outcome of the project – establish meaningful collaborations/networks with practitioner communities.
- Proposed projects should outline how they plan to **anticipate potential future crisis scenarios**. A wide range of anticipatory methodologies and approaches are welcome.

Main aims of the call (including funding phase two)

- **Advance the scientific and conceptual understanding of societal resilience** in the context of selected crises and beyond (relevant in particular for phase one).
- Develop and **strengthen social science-driven methodological capacities to anticipate** and analyze potential future crisis scenarios using diverse and innovative approaches (relevant for phase one & two).
- **Establishing networks with practitioners** to support strong and sustainable partnerships between researchers and societal actors to co-produce actionable knowledge and test solutions that enhance resilience in real-world contexts (building the networks is relevant during phase one funding and will be the main criteria for funding in phase two).
- **Generate new scientific knowledge** that contributes to publications, academic theses, and the broader social sciences community (relevant in particular for phase two).
- Lay the **groundwork for actionable solutions** informed by research outcomes based on interdisciplinary collaboration and involvement of practitioner communities. Address crises in a way that strengthens societal capacity to respond, adapt, and thrive amidst uncertainty (relevant in particular for phase two).

ESS26 - Resilience and Crises / Outlook for funding phase two

Please consider the following aspects that will be crucial in funding phase two when writing the proposal for funding phase one.

Applicants of this call are encouraged to take into account the main requirements for the second funding phase from the outset. In the first funding phase, up to 20 projects will be supported. These projects will then be invited to submit a proposal for continued funding, a selected sample will go into the second phase.

- Funding for the second phase will cover a total project budget of up to €600,000–700,000 for a maximum duration of four years and thus providing resources to employ PreDocs.
- The involvement of relevant practitioners already in the application of funding phase two will be mandatory. Considerations from practical contexts should shape the proposed work program.
- Interdisciplinary collaboration must continue and may be further expanded.
- Projects funded in phase one may form a consortia for the application in funding phase two.
- Generating new empirical evidence and advancing scientific knowledge will be central in the second funding phase, ensuring that the project also results in scientific publications and academic theses.

ESS26 - Resilience and Crises / Structure of the Call

This call follows a one-stage selection process. Please note that there will be a another application process for funding phase two.

- **Proposals:** Applicants provide a description of the project's background, objectives and methodology, along with a budget overview.

Proposal deadline: June 17, 2026, 2pm CET.

ESS26 - Resilience and Crises / Submission

Applications must be submitted via the [WWTF Funding Portal](#). All application information will be processed via this system.

- All core team members, i.e., coordinating PI (PI&C) and co-PIs, may access and edit the proposal. **Only the PI&C can submit the proposal.**
- The structure of the proposal and steps for completing the application in the WWTF Funding Portal are described in more detail in the [Submission Guideline](#). There are some specifics to this call which can be found [here](#).
- **Signatures of the authorized signatory at participating institutions** (“authorizations”) are required in the application process for all partner institutions. Please contact your institution’s research service in advance and inform yourself about your institute’s internal processes and timelines.
- Applications must be written in **English**. Submission in other languages will be formally rejected.

ESS26 - Resilience and Crises / Eligibility and roles of applicants

The general eligibility of applicants is specified in the [WWTF Funding Guideline](#) (*in German only*).

A project's **core team** may include **up to three Principal Investigators (PIs)**. This includes a PI&C and up to two co-PIs.

- Core team members may share equal management and scientific roles in the project.
- The core team must have an excellent scientific track record that demonstrates the ability to conduct the proposed research project.
- WWTF especially encourages young and female scientists to apply as PI.
- **Each core team member must submit a CV**, which will form part of the evaluation.

A researcher may appear as a core team member (i.e., PI&C, co-PI) **in a maximum of two proposals** in this call. In case of three or more proposals with the same PI, WWTF will accept the first two proposals submitted. Involvement in other past / ongoing / granted WWTF projects does not impact upon eligibility to apply in this call.

One PI must be designated as **PI&C** (PI and coordinator).

- For legal and administrative reasons (funding contract, reporting), WWTF requires a PI&C to be named. The PI&C will be the contact person for WWTF regarding all aspects of the project.
- The PI&C must have an affiliation at a Viennese research institution, which will serve as a legal contract partner. This also applies to researchers moving to Vienna, who must have a Viennese affiliation in case of funding.
- The PI&C should be an expert in an area relevant to the topic of the proposal. The PI&C must have an excellent scientific track record in the social sciences and a proven capability to manage projects.

Up to two **co-PIs** may also be named in the core team.

- WWTF recognizes that co-PIs may have equally significant scientific roles in the project. However, the PI&C will be regarded as the main contact person for the project.
- Co-PIs may be based in Vienna, Lower Austria or elsewhere (in Austria or internationally) in fulfilment of the requirements of regular WWTF projects or Joint Projects (see below).
- Please note that the **research team must be interdisciplinary**, which can also encompass two distinct fields from the social sciences. Please note that the two different fields should each provide distinct insights into the chosen topic.

Additional **project partners and collaborators** are permitted in the research team.

- Non-academic collaboration partners (e.g., NGOs, public authorities) may be part of the research team. However, the core team members and majority of additional team members in the proposal should have an academic background.
- Industry partners are not eligible for funding, but may partake with in-kind or financial contribution.

Research partners outside Vienna:

- For regular WWTF projects, project partners outside of Vienna may receive up to 20% (i.e., <20%) the total requested funding.
- This call operates under the [“Joint Projects” agreement with the Province of Lower Austria](#)

ESS26 - Resilience and Crises / Joint Projects with partners in Lower Austria

WWTF welcomes **Joint Project (JP) applications** between Viennese and Lower Austrian universities and research institutions in this call.

The aims of this initiative are to promote research cooperation between Lower Austria and Vienna on equal terms and to strengthen cooperation of research institutions in the Vienna region.

- The PI&C must be affiliated to a research institution in Vienna.
- At least one co-PI must be affiliated to a research institution in Lower Austria.
- The share of the overall funding allocated to research institutions in Lower Austria must be >20% and <50%. In case that the Lower Austrian share is $\leq 20\%$, the project is considered as a regular WWTF project and is not eligible for the higher maximum funding amount.
- The Lower Austrian share is financed by the Province of Lower Austria. Hence, the Lower Austrian project partner must comply with the [Lower Austrian Culture Promotion Act 1996](#) [and the directives](#) issued on the basis thereof. Further details will be provided in the funding contract.
- Partners outside Vienna or Lower Austria are also possible and may request up to 20% (i.e., <20%) of the total budget. However, the share of the budget allocated to partner(s) in Vienna must be at least 50% (i.e., $\geq 50\%$).
- Regional branches of Viennese Institutions (e.g., BOKU, VetMed, AIT) located in Lower Austria are considered as Vienna-based in the context of WWTF funding activities.

ESS26 - Resilience and Crises / Structure of the proposal

The content and structure of the proposal are defined and specified in the Submission Guideline as well as directly in the [WWTF Funding Portal](#).

We encourage you to create a proposal in the Funding Portal to see the details of the proposal. By creating a proposal, you do not enter into any obligations toward WWTF. Incomplete and non-submitted proposals will be deleted after the call deadline.

For the proposal structure, please see "[Details of Chapters](#)".

ESS26 - Resilience and Crises / Evaluation criteria

The following criteria are used in the evaluation.

Main evaluation criteria

- **Scope:** Is the project within the [scope of the call](#) as described in this document?

Projects that do not meet the key requirements regarding scope will be rejected by the jury, regardless of scientific quality.

The key criteria in the evaluation of proposals are **scientific excellence of the project and applicants** and **interdisciplinarity**:

- **Innovative character** of the proposed research project:
 - Does the proposed research advance the scientific and **conceptual understanding of societal resilience** in the context of selected crises and beyond?
 - To what extent does the proposed project develop and strengthen social science-driven methodological capacities to anticipate and systematically analyse **potential future crisis scenarios**, including through the use of diverse and innovative research approaches?
- **Scientific excellence and academic potential of the applicant(s):** Do the applicants demonstrate the expertise and potential to conduct the proposed research? Please note that scientific track record is measured according to academic age.
 - Does the PI&C have an excellent scientific track record in the area of social sciences?
- **Team composition and interdisciplinary collaboration:** Teams should include an appropriate mix of expertise, bringing together social sciences with other disciplines (including distinct fields within the social sciences). A clear description of the roles of the individual partners and a clear project management plan must be presented. This should demonstrate how the involved researchers and their disciplinary backgrounds will contribute to critical stages of developing and executing the project, and how communication will be fostered throughout the project lifetime.
- The extent to which the proposed project **addresses a societally significant crisis/crises** and demonstrates **clear potential to generate actionable knowledge**, practical solutions, and sustainable collaborations with practitioner communities that strengthen societal resilience beyond academia for funding phase two.

Further evaluation criteria

- **Feasibility:** Can the project realize its goals given the competences of the research team, the methods suggested, the timeframe, resources, and budget?
- **Consideration of gender aspects:** The relevance of potential sex-specific and gender-related aspects of the proposed projects should be considered and explained throughout the proposal.
- **Open Science:** does the Proposal adhere to the [principles of open science](#)?

Other aspects:

- **Career breaks** such as for parental leave, care duties and longer illnesses will be taken into account in the evaluation of the proposals. Please indicate the time periods in the applicants' CV to allow them to be considered.

Please note that the proposal will be evaluated by a jury panel, who will be asked to act as generalists when evaluating proposals. The proposal is intended for a jury panel with expertise covering a range of topics in the field of the social sciences. There will also be some jury members with a non-academic background (in order to assess the societal relevance and impact) as well as national jury members (in order to assess the relevance for the national context).

ESS26 - Resilience and Crises / Eligible costs

All costs that are directly attributable to the project and are regarded as commonly required in the respective scientific fields are eligible for funding. Please also consider your organization's internal guidelines for eligible expenses/costs.

Personnel costs

WWTF is dedicated to funding researchers. Hence, the larger share of the project's budget should be allocated to personnel costs for researchers working on the project.

- Eligible forms of employment contracts are full-time and part-time contracts as well as marginal employments ("Arbeitsvertrag"). Contracts for services ("Werkvertrag") are only permitted if the nature of the work means that it cannot be performed through employment contracts.
- All persons employed through a WWTF-funded project should receive a fair employment contract with at least a minimum wage according to the "Kollektivvertrag" (collective agreement) of the Austrian Universities / non-university research institutions. For staff employed at institutions without a collective agreement, the minimum wage should adhere to the standards of the Austrian Science Fund ([FWF salary scheme](#)).
- Salaries higher than those stipulated in the collective agreement are possible, subject to the agreement from the host institution and justification based on qualifications of the researcher.
- Due to projected inflation rates, the budget calculation for salaries in the Funding Portal automatically includes an increase of 3.5% p.a. for the duration of the project (in the full proposal online form).
- Applications for personnel costs must be in one of the following categories:
 - **Senior Personnel:** highly qualified scientists, usually permanently employed
 - **Post Doc:** or equivalent qualification, including Senior Postdocs
 - **PhD Student:** or equivalent qualification level
 - **Diploma Student:** Bachelor or Master students
 - **Office/Technician:** administrative or technicians (proportional funding only)
- Personnel costs **cannot** be claimed for permanent senior staff who are already fully financed by the institution. Exceptions apply in cases where senior staff must acquire third party funding for co-financing their own position (e.g., non-university research institutions and Universities of Applied Sciences). In these cases, permanently employed senior staff may claim up to 20% of their annual salary from WWTF.

- Personnel costs for non-academic partners such as NGOs can only be claimed to a limited extent. Personnel costs for partners in public authorities cannot be claimed.

Non-personnel costs

Running costs for basic infrastructure (telephone costs, rents) as well as costs for the acquisition of infrastructure and basic equipment are **not** eligible for funding, as these should be covered by the category “overhead costs”. The following categories of non-personnel costs are eligible for funding:

- **Equipment:** Smaller equipment can be purchased with funds from the grant. This includes devices up to € 1,500 each, as well as software specific to the projects. General office software is not eligible for funding. Funding by WWTF in project calls is not intended to cover investment in general and larger infrastructure. However, pro rata depreciation rates over the project duration for equipment necessary to the project may be funded.
- **Consumables:** Costs for project-related expenses like consumables are permitted. WWTF does not fund consumables that are general and not project-specific (e.g., paper, printer toner).
- **Travel costs:** Costs for travel and accommodation for scientific meetings and conferences, field work, expeditions may be funded. Please also consider the regulations of your organization for travel costs.
- **Publication costs:** Costs incurred for publication activities, e.g., printing costs, article processing charges (for open science), etc. are allowed. This also includes costs for archiving research data in open repositories. Please also consider [WWTF's Open Science Policy](#).
- **Workshop/conferences:** Costs for organizing events, workshops, and conferences as well as for hosting invited speakers are eligible. Other costs: Third-party costs, namely, for external collaboration, consulting, studies, and software development may be funded to a limited extent. In general, individuals should be predominantly funded through employment contracts at the participating institutions and not through other types of employment. Under special conditions, costs for childcare and/or career coaching for female WWTF-funded personnel may be requested to a small degree.

Non-personnel costs should not exceed 50% of the overall budget.

Indirect costs (overheads)

WWTF pays a maximum of 20% overhead.

Overhead is calculated as a percentage of the direct costs of the project (i.e., personnel + non-personnel costs). Please note that WWTF offers the maximum 20% overhead lump sum to compensate for all administration costs. This means that flat fees for payroll or project accounting are not eligible. The total funding volume is calculated as direct plus indirect costs.

Applicants are required to comply with the overhead regulations of the involved institutions.

Please consider [WWTF's Recognition of Costs in Funding Guidelines](#) (in German only. Please use your preferable translation program to translate the guidelines into English).

ESS26 - Resilience and Crises / Gender aspects in the application phase

WWTF's Gender Strategy and Gender Equality Plan must be considered throughout the application. Please regard [WWTF's guidelines and instructions](#), in particular the chapter regarding the proposal phase.

ESS26 - Resilience and Crises / Guidelines for good scientific practice and ethics (incl. AI use in proposal writing)

Good scientific practice

Compliance with the **rules for good scientific practice**, including the observance of ethical aspects in research, is mandatory. This pertains to the application process and, in case of funding, the research work.

- WWTF is member of the Austrian Agency for Research Integrity (OeAWI) and thus committed to their standards for good scientific practice. Hence, applicants must comply to [OeAWI standards](#)
- In case of suspected scientific misconduct, WWTF will employ the ombudsperson at the applicant's institution or request OeAWI to investigate the case.
- Based on the outcome of investigations by the ombudsperson or OeAWI, WWTF reserves the right to exclude the applicants and the application from the involved and future calls.

Use of AI in Proposal Writing

WWTF recognizes that the use of genAI tools is pervasive and can facilitate proposal writing, for example in relation to improving written language. However, substantial use of genAI must be declared as such for the sake of transparency.

“Substantial use” is defined in line with the European Commission’s definition: “[...] using generative AI as a basic author support tool is not a substantial use. However, interpreting data analysis, carrying out a literature review, identifying research gaps, formulating research aims, developing hypotheses, etc. could have a substantial impact.” (EC 2024: Living Guidelines on the responsible use of generative AI in research.)

This mainly concerns critical parts of scientific relevance, such as hypothesis formulation and the scientific project plan. Applicants will be required to provide statements on the use of generative AIs at both the short and full proposal stages. WWTF emphasizes the importance of human responsibility for the content submitted at all stages of the application process.

In review and evaluation processes WWTF does not allow AI to be used for the actual formation of judgments and decision-making.

Ethical aspects

Project proposals may include **ethical aspects** that require the approval from an ethics committee/institutional review board. Please consider WWTF's requirements regarding ethical aspects at the different stages of the call and, if applicable, upon the selection of a project for funding.

- In the proposal, applicants provide a brief statement regarding the ethical aspects of the project. Applicants must indicate whether a formal ethical approval is required for the proposed work.

When in doubt, WWTF may require a verdict of an ethics committee even if the projects has identified no potential ethical issues regarding their proposed work.

- If available, the ethical approval (final or preliminary) or confirmation of submission of an ethical approval should be submitted. If an ethical approval for the proposed work has yet not been granted, applicants must provide a timeline and an explanation of the feasibility of obtaining the necessary ethical approvals. In the latter case, applicants commit themselves to obtaining the required permits to commence the project in a timely manner, should it be selected for funding.
- Upon selection for funding, submission of the final ethical approvals to WWTF is a prerequisite for the funding contract. As projects must start no later than January 2027, grantees must ensure that ethical approvals are submitted to WWTF in time for the funding contract to be concluded.

Please note that the feasibility of obtaining the required ethical approval will be considered during the evaluation of the proposal. Insufficient demonstration of the ability to obtain ethical approvals within a timely manner may result in the project being excluded by the jury panel.

Please note the following requirements regarding **ethical approvals** for WWTF-funded projects.

- The approval by the ethics committee should be specific for the planned WWTF project. Therefore, the title of the project should be the same as on the approval (minor deviations are possible). If the title of the approved research differs significantly from the proposed project, a statement must be provided (in the Funding Portal), confirming that the approval will cover the planned research.
- If the main applicant for the ethical approval is not a core team member (i.e., PI&C or co-PI) of the WWTF proposal, a clear statement must be included in the proposal, in which a core team member confirms that he/she is authorized to conduct the planned research within this ethical approval.

- If the planned research is covered by an existing approval, the applicants must submit the extension of the approval (“Verlängerung der Gültigkeit des Votums”). The above also applies for extensions.

Non-compliance will result in the rejection of the proposal on formal grounds.

ESS26 - Resilience and Crises / Open Science

WWTF requires compliance with its [Open Science Policy](#). This document outlines the rights, roles and responsibilities of WWTF, researchers, and research organizations.

ESS26 - Resilience and Crises / Selection and decision process

Applications must be submitted via the online [Funding Portal](#) in the specified timeframes. Submissions after the deadline will not be considered.

The core element of WWTF's decision-making processes is an **international jury** mandated to make a funding recommendation to the WWTF boards.

- Depending on the call (size, scope etc) the jury is comprised of 6-12 outstanding experts. As this call takes place within the instrument of "Ergänzende Instrumente" according to WWTF funding guidelines, some members of the jury will have an Austrian affiliation.
- Jury members are selected by WWTF according to their expertise in the call topic. They have no known conflict of interest prior to the submission deadline. For details, see section on evaluation below.
- The names of jury members will be published on the WWTF website after the WWTF Board of Directors finalize the formal funding decision.

Formal eligibility check by WWTF

WWTF office will conduct a formal eligibility check of the proposal based on the criteria outlined in the [WWTF Funding Guideline](#), and this document. This includes:

- All required signatures from the appropriate persons are uploaded.
- All projects will be checked for plagiarism with software.
- Submission of the same or highly similar research ideas to other funding organizations, which must be explicitly declared in the proposal. Application for funding at other organizations is permitted and will not impact the evaluation. In case of funding, applicants will be asked by which organization they wish to be funded, as double funding is not permitted by WWTF.

Substantial deficiencies and missing sections in the application will lead to the exclusion of the application from further evaluation and rejection on formal grounds. The strict timeline of the call does not allow for proposals to be sent back to the applicants for amendments.

Evaluation of the proposals

- Each proposal is independently assessed by at least two jury members based on the evaluation criteria.

Jury meeting

The jury will convene about 3 months after the submission deadline to select full proposals to recommend for funding. The jury may be extended by additional members in case supplementary expertise is needed to cover the topics of the proposals. At least two jury members are assigned to each proposal and act as rapporteurs for the proposals.

- The result is a recommendation for each project: “to be funded” or “not to be funded”.

Formal funding decision

The jury recommendation will be formally confirmed first by the WWTF Advisory Board and then approved by the WWTF Board of Directors.

- Applicants will be promptly informed about the decision.
- The decision may include budget cuts as well as additional conditions and recommendations.
- Unsuccessful applicants will receive a short statement by the jury explaining the main reasons why the project was not selected for funding.

Please note that WWTF does not allow the opportunity for rebuttals within this call to either recommendations by the jury panel or decisions by the WWTF Board of Directors.

ESS26 - Resilience and Crises / In case of a positive funding decision ...

Conclusion of a Funding Contract

In case of funding, WWTF office will contact the PI&C to draw up the funding contract.

- WWTF encourages projects to start as soon as possible after the formal funding decision by the WWTF Board of Directors. To facilitate a timely project start, WWTF will directly contact the PI&C shortly after the funding decision to commence the contracting process.
- The funding decision will be announced in October 2026. The formal start of the project may be **no later than January 2027**. Please note that WWTF does not require all team members of the funded project to begin by the project's start date.

A timely and mostly simultaneous start of the projects is necessary so that all projects are roughly in the same project phase when the application period for funding phase two starts.

- The PI&C will be provided with the necessary documents for the contracts.
- The formal funding contract will be signed between WWTF and the host institution of the PI&C. In Joint Projects, the host institution of the co-PI in Lower Austria is an additional contract partner.
- For universities, this is a project according to §27 of the Universities Act 2002. The institution then authorizes the respective PI to sign for the full scientific and financial responsibility of the project.

Monitoring and Reporting of Funded Projects

Funded teams commit themselves to delivering reports and participating in evaluation and monitoring. WWTF offers the possibility to adapt the work plan according to project needs. For details, see the [Reporting and Accounting Guideline](#) (in German only).

Please note that due to the short duration of the projects, there will only be one final report.

Community Building

WWTF is highly committed to establish a community around the topic of this call. To this end, several community building activities will be offered throughout the funding cycle. Funded teams will be invited to participate in these activities to foster collaborations between and beyond WWTF funded projects.