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).

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