

ICT26 Digital Humanism / Scope of the Call

This call is open to research projects in the area of Digital Humanism as interdisciplinary cooperation between SSH and ICT.

Digital Humanism

This call is issued within WWTF's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Programme. It invites research teams to submit proposals that engage with digital technologies and digital practices from the perspective of Digital Humanism. Digital technologies and practices exert enormous transformative forces on our society—including many that are considered positive, but also many that question the very foundations of our society—in particular, human rights and liberal democratic orders.

Rather than rejecting digital technologies in principle or accepting them in a techno-deterministic fashion, Digital Humanism takes a constructive stance. It considers the ability of humans and societies to actively shape technological developments, while also taking into account that we (our behaviours and values) are, in turn, shaped by technologies, since they incorporate implicit and explicit values and interests.

Digital Humanism as a field of research brings together researchers from ICT and the social sciences and humanities (SSH, including artistic research). With knowledge and insights from SSH, ICT research can lay the foundations for digital technologies and practices that are more socially robust and promote human values. In this way, Digital Humanism can contribute to more inclusive and sustainable technological development and support democratic values.

To ensure the scientifically robust integration of human and societal aspects into digital technologies and practices, collaboration between ICT and disciplines from the wide spectrum of SSH is central to Digital Humanism research.

Please also consider the following aspects:

- This call is open to research on **all topics of digital technologies and practices**. Research on topics not well represented in the Vienna research community (e.g., the economics of platforms) is particularly encouraged to apply in this call. Applicants must demonstrate the relevance of the proposed research to the progress and pursuit of democratic societies and the promotion of human values.

- The proposed projects should strongly reflect the ideas and principles of Digital Humanism and thus **bring together social and technological progress on a level playing field**.
- Projects should aim for a comprehensive understanding of digital technologies and practices **based on insights from both ICT sciences and SSH**.
- Projects may place varying emphases on methods development, theoretical and conceptual work, or the addressing of real-world cases. However, all proposed projects should **improve understanding of current fundamental questions regarding the social and human aspects of digital technologies and practices**, and thus contribute to the rethinking of existing developments in digital technologies and practices.
- Applicants are especially **invited to make theoretical contributions** that expand Digital Humanism as a conceptual space within which a wider range of digital technologies and practices can be understood. The focus of the theoretical contributions may either be in the ICT fields or in the SSH fields. However, based on the call's intention to foster interdisciplinary collaboration, both fields should be represented in developing theoretical approaches.
- Because Digital Humanism often cannot rely on an established set of methods to engage with research questions in an interdisciplinary way, applicants are encouraged to dedicate time and resources to the development of these methods.
- Projects in the area of digital humanities/computational social sciences, i.e., the prevalent use of computational methods to research questions in the SSH, are not within the scope of this call.
- The development of new applications and tools to pursue the idea of Digital Humanism is possible within the project. However, they should be regarded as a means to address fundamental research questions of Digital Humanism and thus not be the main output of the project.

Interdisciplinary Collaboration

A central focus of this call, and of Digital Humanism in general, is to promote collaboration between ICT-related researchers and SSH. Researchers from both ICT-related fields and SSH (including art-based research) should therefore collaborate across disciplines. This should be reflected accordingly in the team composition. Both areas should contribute to the project in a substantial way, although one area may assume a larger role in the project if justified by the specific topic of the project.

Plans for collaboration between ICT and SSH areas must be demonstrated throughout all critical stages of the project, from the formulation of the research question and empirical research to the production of the project's output. Applicants are required to explicitly address communication and joint work plans among collaborators in the proposal.