

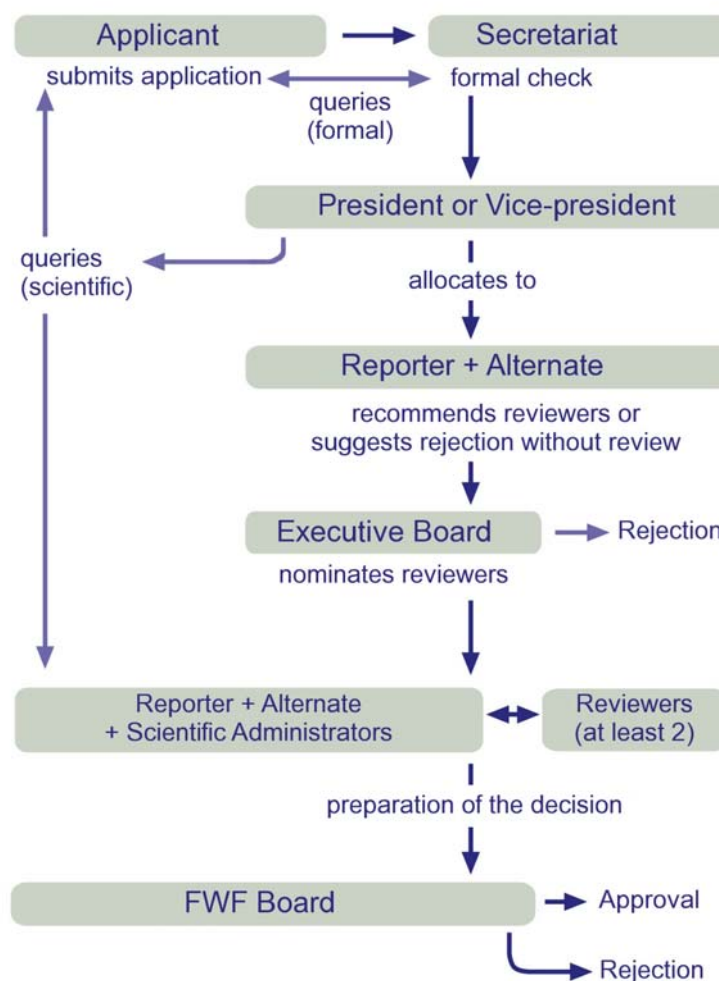
## Review Process and Working Procedures of the FWF Stand-alone Projects

### The selection process

All applications submitted to the FWF are subjected to a peer review process in which only scientists working outside Austria are requested to review proposals. Their reviews represent the basis for all decisions on funding. Both the quality and the international relevance of the research are thus guaranteed.

The FWF handles applications in the same way **regardless of their subject area**. There is no quota system and funding is distributed between different scientific disciplines based only on the scientific quality of the applications.

### Flow diagram



## **1. Submission**

Applications should conform to the "Application Guidelines for Stand-alone Projects" included with the FWF forms.

Following receipt of an application, the FWF Secretariat checks to ensure that it is complete and that all formal requirements are met. The application is then entered into the FWF's computer system and the applicant is sent a letter acknowledging receipt. The relevant Departmental President allocates the application to a particular Reporter and Alternate. Allocation is based primarily on scientific area but particular attention is paid to ensure that the chosen Reporter and Alternate are absolutely impartial. If an outside observer could think that a certain Reporter or Alternate may not be completely impartial, this Reporter or Alternate will not be involved in any way with the application. In the case of applications that relate to more than one scientific discipline, one or more Alternates assists with their handling.

## **2. Initiation of international review**

In close collaboration, the Reporters and Alternates propose appropriate referees to the Executive Board. As a general rule, scientists working within Austria are not considered as potential referees. Applicants may request that up to three persons be excluded from the review process (because of competition or of a difference in scientific opinion). In selecting referees attention is paid to ensure that there are neither negative nor positive conflicts of interest.

The Executive Board of the FWF takes decisions on initiation of the review procedure. Reviewers are nominated based on the proposals from the Reporters and/or Alternate. The Executive Board is not tied to meeting dates and its decisions are taken continually. If the Executive Board determines that a particular application does not meet the FWF's formal criteria it may reject the application without review. Such decisions are taken following examination by the responsible Reporter and Alternate.

## **3. The review procedure**

The number of reviews required for a funding decision depends primarily on the amount of support requested. For applications that relate to more than one scientific discipline a larger number may be needed.

### **Minimum number of reviews required before funding can be approved**

For requests up to EUR 300,000 at least two reviews are needed; for each increase of up to EUR 100,000 at least one further review is required. For each EUR 150,000 requested above EUR 500,000, the number of reviews needed increases dramatically..

A review is comprised of a form on which a referee ranks an application on a 100-point scale and accords ratings to various aspects (notes 1 to 5), and a written report. Referees are requested to divide their reports into two sections, one that can be transmitted in full to the applicant and, if desired, one with confidential remarks to the FWF. If the content of the text is insufficient (e.g. it consists largely of a description of the project or it is extremely brief) the review is not taken into consideration. In addition, referees are requested to declare any possible conflict of interest. In such cases reviews (if they are even written) may also be disregarded. The form and Instructions to Referees may be found on pages 4 to 5.

If the review includes specific questions, the applicant may in exceptional cases be given the opportunity to respond to them during the review procedure. Particular questions and

criticisms are transmitted anonymously to the applicants and the answers forwarded to the referees concerned before the final evaluation is made.

#### **4. The decision**

The average length of time between receipt of an application by the FWF and the decision by the FWF's Board is 4-6 months. As soon as enough sufficiently detailed reviews are available the subsequent Board meeting can decide whether and to what extent to support the proposal. The Board meets six times per year and meetings last for two days.

The Reporter responsible for the application presents it to the Board, together with a summary of the reviews received and taking into account any comments of the Alternate(s). If the application comes from a person or an institution or group with which individual members of the Board have a close relationship, these Board members leave the room before the application is presented and take no part in the ensuing discussions. Decisions are often taken only following extensive discussion and comparison between different applications. Most decisions are unanimous.

Following the Board Meeting, the FWF Secretariat will communicate the decisions to the applicants, where appropriate together with (anonymous) reviews or excerpts therefrom.

The Reporters, Alternates and Departmental Presidents are supported in their work by the FWF Secretariat, which is the direct contact point for applicants in all matters relating to projects.

#### **5. Follow-up projects**

Follow-up projects are treated in the same way as new applications.

## **Guidelines for FWF Referees “Stand-alone Projects”<sup>1</sup>**

Applicants are advised to submit requests for funding based on guidelines issued by the FWF; the resulting applications should contain sufficient information to enable referees to comment briefly on the following aspects.

### **Section 1 (to be transmitted in its entirety to the applicant)**

#### **1 Scientific quality of the project**

- importance to the international scientific community in the field(s) concerned
- extent to which the project could break new ground scientifically (innovative aspects)
- importance of the expected results for the discipline (based on the project described)
- clarity of the goals (hypotheses)
- appropriateness of the methods (including work plan, time plan as well as planned strategies for dissemination of results)
- quality of the cooperations (both national and international)

#### **2 Scientific quality of the scientists involved**

- scientific quality and/or potential of the scientists involved
- expected importance of the project for the career development of the participants (project leader and co-workers)

#### **3 Additional aspects**

- Can the project be expected to have implications for other branches of science?
- Is the project expected to have implications that go beyond basic science (potential industrial applications, results of relevance to society etc.)?

(These aspects play no part in the decision of whether the project should be funded. However, when the FWF subsequently examines the success of the project the 'additional aspects' do play a part. Your opinion, where applicable, would be of great help to the FWF.)

#### **4 Suggestions**

- What could (should) be done to increase the project's chance of success?

### **Section 2 (confidential remarks to the FWF)**

#### **1 Financial aspects<sup>2</sup>**

In reviewing an application, please bear in mind that exaggerated costs may represent a reason for rejection.

- appropriateness of personnel and non-personnel costs (including any suggestions for cuts that could be made without jeopardizing the success of the project)
- suggestions for improvement (in the sense of cost / benefit efficiency) to the equipment requested<sup>3</sup>.

#### **2 Concluding recommendation on funding or rejection of the proposal; and any other comments**

---

<sup>1</sup> Further information about the FWF's 'Corporate Policy' and a copy of the 'Guidelines for Project Applications' may be found on the FWF's website ([www.fwf.ac.at](http://www.fwf.ac.at)).

<sup>2</sup> The "general costs" – 5% of the other costs requested - are automatically awarded and need neither to be justified nor to be commented on by referees.

<sup>3</sup> The FWF does not fund basic infrastructure. Nevertheless, we should be very grateful for your opinion on the importance to the project of equipment that could be considered as part of the infrastructure.

# Formal Evaluation

(confidential to the FWF)

## 1. Evaluation of specific aspects of the proposal

Please award marks to the following aspects of the proposal, where 1 indicates excellent; 2 – very good; 3 – average; 4 – below average; and 5 – poor.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| importance to the international scientific community in the field(s) concerned  |  |
| extent to which the project could break new ground scientifically (innovative aspects)  |  |
| importance of the expected results for the discipline (based on the project described)  |  |
| clarity of the goals (hypotheses)   |  |
| appropriateness of the chosen methods (including work plan, time plan as well as planned strategies for dissemination of results) |  |
| appropriateness of the financial planning   |  |
| quality of the cooperations (both national and international)   |  |
| scientific quality / potential of the scientists involved   |  |

## 2. Overall evaluation of the proposed research (please mark a number by a cross)

Please note that the FWF makes high demands on the quality of the projects it funds and thus primarily supports projects rated as excellent. In all cases decisions are based on the written reviews from referees as well as on the numerical ratings they assign.

| Excellent |    |    | Very good |    |    | Average |    |    |    | Below average |    |    |    | Poor |    |    |    |    |
|-----------|----|----|-----------|----|----|---------|----|----|----|---------------|----|----|----|------|----|----|----|----|
| 100       | 95 | 90 | 85        | 80 | 75 | 70      | 65 | 60 | 55 | 50            | 45 | 40 | 35 | 30   | 25 | 20 | 15 | 10 |
|           |    |    |           |    |    |         |    |    |    |               |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |    |

## 3. Recommendation (please mark by a cross)

|                          |            |
|--------------------------|------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Acceptance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Rejection  |