

NEUES ENTDECKEN

TALENTE FÖRDERN

IDEEN UMSETZEN

FWF

Der Wissenschaftsfonds.

In accordance with its funding guidelines of 1 January 2022 (as last amended), the FWF has issued the following

Application Guidelines for the START Programme



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1. General information

1.1. Aim of the programme

The fundamental aim of the programme is to support researchers from all disciplines at the beginning of their academic career with at least two and at most eight years of postdoctoral experience who have already produced scientific/scholarly work of a top international standard and whose research careers to date make it likely that they will continue to conduct first-rate research in the future.

A START project with a budget of at least €800,000 and a maximum of €1,200,000 is intended to provide medium-term financial security for research activities over a period of five years. START principal investigators should acquire the necessary qualifications for a leading position in research (especially as a professor in Austria or abroad) by independently managing a generously funded research project.

The programme is targeted at researchers from all disciplines. In principle, the FWF aims to achieve as balanced a distribution as possible between disciplines and genders, but there are no fixed quotas for individual subject areas. Priority will be given to principal investigators who are in an early stage of their career and have not yet received any third-party funding in programmes with similar aims and comparable funding amounts,¹ e.g., “ERC Starting Grants”.

As one of the most generously supported funding programmes for individuals doing research in Austria, the START Programme is very visible in the public eye and makes a significant contribution to the reception and acceptance of research in society.

1.2. Submission

Applications must be submitted to the FWF via the electronic application portal [elane](#) by **20 September 2022 (13:59 CEST)**.

The project funding is administered through the research institution ([PROFI](#)); therefore, the application must be submitted by both the principal investigator and the responsible research institution; the principal investigator should contact the office responsible at the research institution (e.g., research service) as soon as possible. All the forms required for the application must be filled in online; other documents such as the project description (incl. annexes) and the additional documents must be uploaded as separate files. For more information, see "[User manual electronic application system - elane](#)".

¹ The criterion of third-party funding in programmes with similar aims and comparable funding will not be taken into account if the comparable grant is close to the end or already finished.

1.3. Who is eligible to apply?

All Austrian **research institutions** are eligible to apply. The application must be submitted together by the principal investigator and the research institution where the project is to be carried out. The project must be carried out in Austria or under the auspices of an Austrian research institution at which the principal investigator works. Project-related stays abroad, for instance, for field research, can be scheduled and must be included in the project description.

It is not possible to submit applications with principal investigators who hold a permanent professorship at the time of application or who have already accepted an appointment to a permanent professorship.

The START Programme is aimed at highly qualified postdocs of all disciplines from Austria and abroad with a minimum of two and a maximum of eight years' experience in their academic career (see also the requirements in [section 1.5.1.](#)).

1.3.1. Can several applications be submitted simultaneously?

There is no limit to the number of applications that can be submitted by a **research institution**.

The following restrictions/requirements apply for **principal investigators** with regard to START applications/projects and other simultaneous applications/projects:

- It is not possible for one person to serve as the principal investigator in several START projects/applications.
- It is also not possible to submit parallel applications with identical content in other FWF programmes such as Stand-Alone Projects, international Programmes, ESPRIT, etc. The sole exception to this rule is the Elise Richter Programme, where at the same time an application which is substantially similar in content may be submitted as long as the programme-specific guidelines are observed.
- A START submission based on (a content overlap with) an already ongoing funding programme (e.g., Stand-Alone project, Elise Richter project) is possible. Should the START project be approved, the already ongoing funding must be transferred to the START project and terminated with the start of the START project.
- By submitting a START application, the principal investigator undertakes, provided that they are formally eligible to apply, to submit a research project with the same content for funding under the next possible call² of the “ERC Starting Grant” (see also [section 2.3.1.](#), “programme specific data”). The research institution and the principal investigator commit themselves to using the ERC funding in the event that both funding applications are approved. Further information on the ERC funding programmes can be found [here](#).

² If formal eligibility exists, submission of an ERC application with the same content must take place at the next opportunity (October 2022).

- Please note that the number of ongoing/approved projects is limited for principal investigators in the START Programme. Further information on the restriction on the number of ongoing projects and the limit on the number of applications can be found at [Restriction on the number of projects](#).
- The principal investigators of a START application can apply simultaneously to other organisations for funding for the planned research project; however, they are required to inform the FWF immediately in writing both of applications submitted to other funding institutions as well as the decisions made on these applications. The decision-making body in the FWF will decide whether and to what extent this third-party funding will be deducted from the funding through the START Programme. If substantially identical applications are approved by other national and international funding organisations, and the approved funding is sufficient to carry out the planned research project, the principal investigator must decide on one of the approved funding grants. It is not possible to combine them.

1.4. What types of projects can be funded?

Funding may be requested for projects in basic research that are clearly defined, innovative, convincingly described in terms of objectives and methods, and limited in time.

Projects are considered to carry out innovative basic research when they possess one or more of the following attributes: (i) research on new ideas and/or examination of new research questions, (ii) development or application of new research methods, new technologies, or original approaches to solving research questions, or (iii) application or modification of existing methods, technologies, or approaches to new research questions. (Please note that the next logical step or the incremental further development of published data is not considered to be innovative or original).

Aspects of a research project that go beyond the realm of science and scholarship (e.g., applications of the research results in business, society, politics, etc.) may be mentioned in the application, but they will not play a part in the assessment of whether the project should be funded.

The **duration of funding** is **60 months**. Multiple funding is not permitted (see [Funding guidelines](#)).

During an interim evaluation after three years, the research can be adapted to the changed research environment if necessary.

1.5. What requirements must be met to apply?

1.5.1. Requirements for principal investigators

The doctoral degree of principal investigators must have been awarded at least two and no more than eight years before the submission deadline (20 September 2022).

In addition, the principal investigator's publication record over the last five years must be internationally visible and commensurate with the expected career path in their field. The following criteria are decisive for assessing the publication record—documented in the additional *Publication_list.pdf* (see [Section 2.2.4.](#))—and initiating the review process:

- **Quality assurance:** The primary publications for evaluating the publication record are those that have been subjected to a quality assurance procedure in line with high international standards (peer review or an equivalent procedure; peer review is expected in the natural and life sciences). The journals must usually be listed in the *Web of Science*, *Scopus*, or the *Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)*. For journals not listed in those databases; monographs, edited volumes, or contributions therein; or other publication types, the principal investigator must provide a link to the publisher's website which contains a description of the respective quality assurance procedure. Should no such description be available on the website, it is the principal investigator's responsibility to provide evidence that the publication has been subject to a quality assurance procedure in accordance with the standards of the field.
- **International visibility:** Most of the principal investigator's publications must have a wider than national reach. In the natural sciences, life sciences, and social sciences, most of the publications listed must be in English.
- **Number/scope and quality** of the principal investigator's publications must be commensurate with the expected career path and the field. At least two publications must be quality-assured and internationally visible publications with a substantial and independent contribution on the part of the principal investigator. At least one publication with first, last, or corresponding authorship in the life sciences is required.

In addition, principal investigator should ideally have completed a stay abroad of at least one year at the time of application and have already independently acquired competitive third-party funding after the doctorate.

Should a principal investigator fail to meet one or more of the specified the criteria listed above in the bullet point list, the principal investigator must include a justification with the application. In cases of doubt, the decision-making bodies of the FWF shall decide whether the research qualifications are adequate.

Consideration of career breaks

When assessing the principal investigator's eligibility to apply with regard to the academic age limit, the FWF will take justified career breaks (e.g., parental leave,³ caring for a family member, long-term illness, and military or civil service) into consideration. Besides the above-mentioned career breaks, the FWF will also take any relevant subject-specific education and/or training periods into consideration in the assessment of the five-year period mentioned in this section. Relevant information can be included in the academic CV and thus also be available to the reviewers.

If the principal investigator needs to have career breaks recognised in order to be eligible to apply, it is recommended to contact the FWF in advance of submission to determine if the principal investigator possesses justified career breaks in the required amount.

Inclusion of disabled and chronically ill people

The FWF will also take any exceptions to typical career paths due to disability and/or chronic illness into consideration in determining whether the principal investigator meets the application requirements. Relevant information can be included in the academic CV and thus also be available to the reviewers.

1.6. What types of funding can be requested?

Project-specific costs are eligible for funding. These include personnel and non-personnel costs that are necessary for carrying out the project and that go beyond the resources provided by the infrastructure of the research institution. The FWF does not finance the infrastructure or basic equipment of research institutions. The amount of funding requested must be between €800,000 and €1,200,000 for the entire funding period.

The START Programme provides the possibility of full-time employment for the principal investigator. To cover the personnel costs of the principal investigator, funding should be requested for a senior postdoc salary in accordance with the [FWF's personnel costs and salaries](#) for PROF1 projects, including a fixed percentage increase for the subsequent year to compensate for wage rises.

2. Application content and form

2.1. Sections of the application

For an application to be complete, it must contain the following sections.

³ Child-raising periods are taken into account (up to three years per child; men must provide proof of having actually cared for the children).

2.1.1. Academic abstract

The academic abstract must be written in English and comprise no more than 3,000 characters (incl. spaces); it may not contain any formulas or special characters. The academic abstract is sent to potential reviewers (if they agree to participate, they will be sent the entire project description). The abstract must be subdivided into the following sections using the English terms provided below:

- Wider research context / theoretical framework
- Hypotheses / research questions / objectives
- Approach / methods
- Level of originality / innovation
- Primary researchers involved

Where options are given (indicated by slashes), please choose an option that is appropriate for your project.

2.1.2. Project description

The project description comprises no more than 22 pages, including table of contents and, if applicable, list of abbreviations, figures, captions, tables, footnotes, etc.

The project description must also include the following annexes on additional pages:

- Annex 1: List of literature cited in the application (References) on no more than 5 pages;
- Annex 2: Information on research institution and justification of requested funding (see [Appendix 2](#));
- Annex 3: Academic CV and description of previous research achievements of the principal investigator (no more than 3 pages);
- Annex 4: Letter of support (in English) from the research institution where the project is to be carried out, signed by the dean or the head of the institution/department or the group leader, etc.;
- Annex 5: (optional): Collaboration letters of national and international cooperation partners (no more than 1 page per letter).

The project description incl. these annexes must be uploaded as *one* file named *Proposal.pdf*. This document will be sent to the reviewers by the FWF.

2.1.3. Additional documents

- Mandatory:
 - Publication lists for internal FWF use to assess the principal investigator's eligibility to apply and to check for conflicts of interest with potential reviewers.

- Where applicable:
 - Additional documents in the case of resubmission: If the application is a revised version of a previously rejected application (see [Section 2.5.](#)), response(s) to the reviews and an overview of all changes made in the resubmitted application must be uploaded.
- Optional:
 - Cover letter to FWF
 - List of up to three researchers (including, where applicable, previous reviewers, see [Section 3.](#)) whom the principal investigator would like to exclude from the review process, including a brief justification.

Any additional documents (e.g., recommendations on potential reviewers, letters of recommendation, forthcoming publications) will not be considered in further stages of the application process.

2.1.4. Forms to be completed

- Required forms: *Research institution assignment form, application form, contact form, programme-specific data form, cost breakdown form, co-authors form, and academic abstract*
- Where applicable: *Cooperation arrangements form*

2.2. Application content and form

2.2.1. Language of application

To allow applications to be reviewed by international scientific or scholarly experts and to facilitate the decision-making process of the international jury, applications must be submitted in **English**.

2.2.2. Formatting and length of the project description

The project description may not exceed 22 pages. It must contain a table of contents with page numbers. Desired components such as a list of abbreviations, figures, captions, tables, footnotes, etc. are to be included in the 22-page limit.

The continuous text in the project description, annexes 1-3, the publication lists, and the parts of the application to be uploaded, where applicable (see [Section 2.3.](#), excluding vendor quotes) must be written, without exception, in 11 pt. font with 1.5 line (15-20 pt.) spacing and at least 2 cm margins. A standard, easy-to-read font must be used for the continuous text.

Citations in the text and the list of works cited (References) in the application must be in line with the conventions of the respective discipline, preferably according to a widely used style guide (e.g., *Chicago Manual of Style, APA Publication Manual*). Principal investigators are free to choose the citation conventions or style guide they prefer, but they must apply them/it

consistently throughout the application. If available, a [DOI address](#) or another [persistent identifier](#) should be used for the literature cited.

2.2.3. Project description and annexes

The project description must contain the following sections designated by headings:

- (1) Table of contents
- (2) State of the art of the relevant international research (including own preliminary work, if applicable) and relation of the project to this context
- (3) Clearly defined aims and hypothesis/hypotheses or research question(s) of the project
- (4) Description of the project's anticipated level of originality or scientific/scholarly innovation
- (5) Methods
- (6) Intended cooperation arrangements (national and/or international) as part of the planned project. Please specify the people with whom the principal investigator aims to collaborate, what the subject of the intended cooperation arrangement(s) will be, and what they will contribute to the project. All the national and/or international cooperation arrangements that are deemed in the project description to be essential to the project must be indicated on the *Cooperation arrangements* form and can be confirmed by a collaboration letter.
- (7) Work plan and timeline
- (8) Research-related qualifications of the researchers involved and significance of the project for the career development of the principal investigator.
- (9) All potential ethical, safety-related, or regulatory aspects⁴ of the submitted project and the planned handling of them must be described briefly in a separate section. These questions should be addressed briefly in the text even if the principal investigator believes the project does not raise any ethical issues.
- (10) A separate section must describe what sex-specific and gender-related issues⁵ the planned project may potentially give rise to, and how the applicant intends to deal with them. These questions should be addressed briefly in the text even if the principal investigator believes the project does not raise any sex-specific and gender-related issues.

⁴ For instance, the European Commission's [Ethics for Researchers](#) or [The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#) can serve as a guide here.

⁵ Positioning and reflecting on the research approaches planned for the project in terms of sex-specific and gender-related issues, for instance: Is the research approach likely to produce sex-specific and gender-related findings? If so, what findings? How and where are these integrated into the research approach? (For information on checking the relevance of sex-specific and gender-related issues to a project, see <https://www.fwf.ac.at/de/ueber-den-fwf/gender-mainstreaming/fix-the-knowledge/detailseite/>).

Annex 1: List of literature cited in the application (References) on no more than 5 pages

Annex 2: Financial aspects

The template for the description of projected costs can be found in [Appendix 2](#).

- Information on the research institution and those of the national research partners
 - Available personnel (not financed by the FWF; usually, the principal investigator and the personnel of the research institutions)
 - Available infrastructure
- Information on the funding requested
 - Concise justifications for the personnel requested (type(s) of requested position(s), job descriptions, extent of employment, and duration of involvement in the project);
 - Concise justifications for non-personnel cost (equipment, materials, travel, and other costs).

Annex 3: The academic CV and previous research achievements of the principal investigator must be described on no more than 3 pages using the following guidelines and structure and the headings provided here in English.

- **Personal details:** Personal details (name, researcher unique identifier(s) such as [ORCID](#), research ID, etc., *no photos*), address of research institution and relevant websites. In addition, it is required to provide a publicly accessible link to the list of all published publications.
- **Education:** List of academic career with date, type, subject, and research institution of each degree
- **Position(s):** List of research relevant positions (with the extent of employment in the case of part-time employment)
- **Career breaks:** Details of career breaks or delays (see also [Section 1.5.1.](#)).
- **Net research experience:** Based on the previous information, the length of time (in years and months) that has actually been used in net total for research—calculated in such a way as to be equivalent to full-time employment—and broken down into the time before and after completion of the doctoral degree. This should make it easier for the reviewers to assess the principal investigator’s qualifications in term of academic age.
- **Research interests:** Description of the main areas of research and the most important research results achieved to date
- **Academic publications:** List of no more than ten of the most important published or accepted academic works (journal articles, monographs, edited volumes, contributions to edited volumes, preprints, proceedings, etc.); for each publication, either a [DOI address](#) or another [persistent identifier](#) must be indicated, if available. In accordance with the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment](#) (DORA), journal-based metrics like the journal impact factor should not be included.

- Additional research achievements: List of no more than ten of the most important scientific/scholarly research achievements apart from academic publications, such as awards, keynote lectures and other conference papers, important research projects, research data, software, codes, exhibitions, knowledge transfers, science communication, licenses, or patents.

Annex 4: A max. 3-page declaration of commitment from the research institution. The name of the author must be stated at the beginning of the document (e.g., the head of the institution or group leader of the institution where the project is to be carried out). Using the English terms given here, the following points must be addressed.

- Qualification/Expertise: Skills and knowledge of the principal investigator to successfully carry out the proposed project and achieve the programme goal
- Career goals: Longer and medium-term research and career goals of the principal investigator, contribution of the proposed project to the achievement of these goals
- Research profile: Contribution of the planned research to strengthening the independent scientific profile of the principal investigator, description of this profile
- Institutional support: Contribution of the research institution to the integration of the principal investigator and description of medium and/or long-term career prospects
- Added value: Contribution of the project to the long-term profile of the research institution and its international competitiveness

Annex 5 (optional): Collaboration letters (each no more than 1 page) of national and international cooperation partners who are convincingly stated in the project description as being essential for the implementation of the project

2.2.4. Additional documents

The form requirements (font type and size, line spacing, and margins) of the project description also apply for the additional documents, except for documents not prepared by the principal investigator, such as vendor quotes for equipment and services.

Publication lists: Lists of all academic works of the principal investigator published over the last five years (journal articles, monographs, contributions to edited volumes, publicly accessible preprints, etc., broken down into “quality-assured publications” and “other publications”)⁶ must be uploaded in one PDF file with the name *Publication_list.pdf*.

The publication lists are used to check for any conflicts of interest with reviewers, but they will not be forwarded to the reviewers. The publication list of the principal investigator also helps the FWF to assess their eligibility to apply in accordance with [Section 1.5.1](#).

⁶ Publication lists must include: all authors, complete titles, journal, year, and page numbers. For each publication, either a [DOI address](#) or another [persistent identifier](#) should be indicated; for publications with more than 20 authors, an “et al.” reference can be used.

2.3. File formats, file names, and online forms

2.3.1. Mandatory parts of the application

Files (to be uploaded):

- *Proposal.pdf* (= project description incl. annexes 1-4 and where applicable 5, with PDF bookmarks, at least for the major sections)
- *Publication_list.pdf* (= publication lists of principal investigator, in one single document)

Forms (to be filled in online):

- *Research institution assignment*
- *Application form*
- *Contact form*
- *Programme specific data incl. declaration of commitment to apply within the framework of the next call for proposals of the "ERC Starting Grant*
- *Cost breakdown*
- *Academic abstract*
- *Co-authors*
- *Cooperation arrangements* (optional)

2.3.2. Optional file uploads

- *Cover_Letter.pdf* (= accompanying letter)
- *Negative_list.pdf* (= list of reviewers who should be excluded)
- *Overview_Revision.pdf* (= in the case of resubmission, overview of all changes made in the resubmitted application)
- *Revision.pdf* (= in the case of resubmission, an overall response to all the reviewers or, if preferred, a short response to each reviewer saved in a separate file: *Revision_A.pdf*, *Revision_B.pdf*, etc.)
- *Quotes_equipment.pdf*
- *Quotes_other_costs.pdf*

2.4. Eligible project-specific costs

When applying for costs, the regulations of the respective research institution must always be taken into account (e.g., for personnel and contracts for work and services). The requested costs must be summarised on a spreadsheet (*Cost breakdown* form).

Funds may only be requested for the cost categories mentioned below.

2.4.1. Personnel costs

The application should include all persons, in addition to the staff already available, who will be required for the proposed project and who will work exclusively on the proposed project.

The available legal categories of employment are contracts of employment for full- or part-time employees (DV) and reimbursement for work on an hourly basis (GB).

Information on the personnel costs and salaries, including a fixed percentage increase for the subsequent year to compensate for wage rises, that can be requested as part of [PROFI](#) (project funding via research institutions) can be found on the FWF's website.

2.4.2. Grant-salaried principal investigators

The FWF defines a grant-salaried principal investigator as a principal investigator whose salary is to be paid from the funding provided for the project.

A senior postdoc rate can be applied for in this context for one's own position (in the case of partial funding, aliquoted accordingly).

2.4.3. Equipment costs

Funding for equipment may only be requested if the equipment is specifically required for the project and if it is not part of the institution's existing infrastructure. "Infrastructure" is considered to include all equipment (and components for the equipment) that must be available in a modern research institution to conduct basic research in the relevant discipline at an internationally competitive level. Thus, items such as computers (laptops, etc.) are considered to be part of the standard infrastructure and therefore no funding will be approved for these items. Please note that if such equipment or components are requested nonetheless, doubts may be raised whether it is possible to conduct leading-edge basic research in such an environment (and indeed how it was possible to carry out the preliminary work related to the project in the first place). This may have an impact on the funding decision.

Equipment may only be requested if it is specifically required for the project. In this context, "equipment" includes scientific instruments, system components, self-constructed devices (generally assembled from smaller pieces of equipment and materials), and other tangible fixed assets as well as intangible assets such as licenses, industrial property rights, and licenses derived from such rights, whose acquisition cost per item exceeds the amount of EUR 1,500.00 (incl. VAT, unless the research institution is entitled to deduct VAT). A vendor quote from a company (PDF scan) must be uploaded with the application for each piece of equipment whose acquisition cost (including VAT) exceeds EUR 5,000.00.

For items of equipment which are required specifically for the project and whose acquisition cost (including VAT) is €24,000.00 or higher, the research institution must confirm with its signature on the "Declaration of the research institution" and the approval and submission of the application that it has verified that no comparable equipment that could be used or shared is available within a reasonable distance, and that the possibility of (co-)financing by

third parties has been explored. The research institution must also ensure that it is aware of any possible costs that could arise from the use, maintenance, and repairs of the equipment.

2.4.4. Material costs

“Materials” encompasses consumables and small pieces of equipment (cost per item is below €1,500.00 incl. VAT).

The calculation of requested funds for project-specific material costs should be justified with reference to the timelines, work plans, and experiment plans. In making the calculation, experience from previous projects should be considered.

2.4.5. Travel costs

Funding may be requested for project-specific travel and accommodation, field work, expeditions, etc. The project description must include a detailed travel plan broken down by project participant. This plan must indicate which persons, for what purpose, when (in which year of the project), for how long and where they will be travelling, and how much this will cost.

When planning travel in connection with a project, researchers should always carefully consider whether travel is absolutely necessary or whether the relevant information can be exchanged virtually. If a project requires travel, transportation by train is preferred to travel by air as a contribution to environmental sustainability. Funding can be requested for any resulting extra costs such as an additional overnight stay. When travelling by air, it is strongly recommended to make a carbon offset contribution,⁷ which can be requested as part of the travel expenses or funded through the budget for general project costs. A carbon offset contribution can be requested for up to 15% of the ticket price.

Travel expenses for researchers from other Austrian and foreign research institutions can only be granted in exceptional cases and require detailed justification.

The calculation of travel and accommodation costs should generally be based on the federal regulations governing travel costs (RGV). The current RGV rates for travel abroad can be found in the following [document](#) (available in German only).

For longer stays, a transparent and appropriate budget should be prepared; in general, this budget will be lower than the costs calculated based on RGV rates.

Funding may be requested for the costs of presenting project results at conferences.

⁷ The amount of a carbon offset contribution for flights can be calculated, for example, using the [CO2 calculator](#) on the website of [Climate Austria](#).

2.4.6. Costs as part of national and international cooperation arrangements

In the case of national cooperation arrangements, costs arising within the context of a research collaboration at the respective research institution are to be borne by that research institution.

Within the context of cooperation arrangements, funds may only be transferred to a cooperation partner (whether or not they are based abroad) if they are clearly limited contracts or services and directly necessary for carrying out the Austrian project. These costs must be substantiated by a vendor quote, and funding for them can be requested under “Other costs”. This does not apply to [cooperation arrangements with scientists or scholars from developing countries](#).

2.4.7. Other eligible costs

- Independent contracts for work and services (costs for work of clearly defined scope and content carried out by individuals, provided that they are justified in terms of research and are economical)
- Costs for the preparation, archiving, open access, and reuse of research data in repositories in accordance with the Open Access Policy of the FWF
- Costs that cannot be included under personnel, equipment, materials, or travel costs, for example: coverage of costs for the use of research facilities, e.g., costs for the project-specific use of available equipment (project-specific “equipment time”) or large research facilities; if the costs exceed EUR 5,000.00 including VAT, vendor quotes must be provided; please upload a PDF scan. Where the costs exceed €10,000.00 not including VAT (over the entire term of the project), each vendor quote must be accompanied by the corresponding calculation basis. This calculation must include information on the nature and scope of the services for which project-specific costs are incurred (according to internal charging procedures, e.g., based on usage days or hours, or based on the number and type of measurements/analyses performed, etc.) and may not contain any infrastructure-related costs like equipment depreciation, supplementary charges for overhead, costs of research premises, etc.
- Costs for any laboratory animals necessary for the project
- Costs for project-specific work carried out outside the applicant’s research institution (e.g., for analysis work performed elsewhere, interviews, sample collection, preparation of thin slices, etc.); in case the costs exceed EUR 5,000.00 including VAT, vendor quotes must be uploaded (PDF scan)
- Costs for the disposal of project-specific hazardous waste.
- Costs for personal coaching and further training measures in the amount of up to EUR 2,000.00 per year, which directly contribute to the career development of the principal investigator.

The FWF will provide additional funding for publications resulting from approved projects in the Peer-Reviewed Publications programme upon request for up to three years after the end of the project. Therefore, no publication costs are to be requested in the application.

2.5. Revising a rejected application (“resubmission”)

A resubmission is defined as the revision of a rejected application which—regardless of the programme category—deals with the same or similar research questions. Where a principal investigator submits an application on the same or very similar research questions yet does not consider it to be a resubmission but an entirely new project, the principal investigator must submit a separate accompanying letter to the FWF Office explaining how the research questions have in fact changed. For example, changes in research methods alone are not sufficient for a proposal to qualify as a completely new project. In cases of doubt, the decision-making bodies of the FWF shall decide.

- An accompanying letter containing an overview of all changes made in the resubmitted application must be submitted to the FWF. This overview will not be passed on to the reviewers.
- Response(s) to reviews: The principal investigator can decide whether the response(s) should only be forwarded to the previous reviewer concerned or to all reviewers. These response(s) should address the suggestions and criticism expressed in each review of the previous application and point out the changes made on that basis. Such responses are not necessary in the case of reviews written by persons who are to be excluded from the review process for the resubmitted application. However, such exclusions must be justified and will also be counted toward the *list of reviewers to be excluded* (see [Section 3.](#)) for the resubmission.

If all the reviewers are to receive these responses, the principal investigator must submit a document containing an overall response. If these responses are to be passed on only to the reviewers who were previously involved, the principal investigator should include a short response to each review in a separate document.

Resubmissions must show changes. In the case of resubmissions of applications that have been rejected for the reasons C3, C4, and C5, the changes need to be substantial (based on the comments in the reviews). If such changes are not made, the application will be returned without review by the decision-making bodies of the FWF.

There is no deadline within which a resubmission of a rejected application must be submitted, but any relevant application requirements must be considered. Submission of a resubmission follows the application procedure described in [Section 2.5.](#), meaning that it is submitted as a new independent application and not as an additional application to the previously rejected application.

3. Processing of and decision on the application

The FWF Office undertakes a formal check of the application. A detailed description of the decision-making process, the criteria for selecting international reviewers, as well as the detailed rules on conflicts of interests and the composition of expert juries and boards can be found in [General Principles of the Decision-making Procedure](#).

All applications that comply with FWF regulations are sent out for review. The reviewers (generally persons working outside of Austria) are nominated by the Reporters of the FWF Board and confirmed by the decision-making bodies of the FWF. At least three reviews are required for a positive decision.

Once the review process has been initiated, no further changes can be made to the application.

The FWF's decision-making bodies decide once a year on the conferring of awards based on a recommendation by the international jury. The international jury's recommendation is based on the results of the review and a hearing, which takes place on the first day of the international jury's annual meeting. In the run-up to the meeting (approx. three to four weeks before the meeting), the international jury draws up a shortlist of promising START candidates who will be invited to a hearing at the meeting of the international jury. Applicants whose project proposals are not selected will already receive a notification of decision at this time, together with the corresponding reviews in anonymised form.

The applicants will be informed of the decisions in writing.

Requests for changes and returning applications without review

The FWF will not process incomplete applications, those which do not comply with the FWF's regulations, or which contain formal errors (in particular, if the maximum length permitted is exceeded), unless and until the principal investigator has rectified the problems within a reasonable period of time (10 working days). If the problems have not been resolved within this period of time, the decision-making bodies of the FWF will return these applications without review. Similarly, the decision-making bodies of the FWF will return without review applications that have been previously rejected by the FWF and resubmitted without appropriate revisions.

The most common reasons why applications are returned without review by FWF decision-making bodies are (a) that the principal investigator's track record of publications does not meet the requirements (see [Section 1.5.1.](#)) and (b) that the application does not address specific hypotheses or research questions (see [Section 2.2.3.](#))

Reasons for rejection

The reasons for rejecting a project will be assigned one of five categories (C1–C5) and will be sent to the principal investigators along with the reviews. A detailed description of the categories can be found in the [General Principles of the Decision-making Procedure](#).

Resubmissions

If the application is a resubmission of a previously rejected application, the FWF will generally contact those reviewers who provided *constructive* criticism on the previous application. Reviewers who gave entirely positive or negative comments will generally not be

contacted for a second review. However, please note that all resubmissions are also evaluated by new reviewers.

Proposal bans

Applications that are rejected for reason C5 will be barred for 12 months (from the date of the decision) and cannot be resubmitted during that period.

Applications that have been submitted three times and rejected for reasons C3 or C4 (i.e., the original application and the respective resubmissions) are also barred for 12 months (from the date of decision); rejections for reasons C1 or C2 do not count towards this total.

In general, only topics are banned, not principal investigators or applying research institutions.

Exclusion of reviewers

As stated in [Section 2.1.3.](#), principal investigators may upload a separate document with a list of reviewers who should not be asked to review the application due to possible conflicts of interest. A detailed description of the FWF's rules concerning conflicts of interests can be found in the [General Principles of the Decision-making Procedure](#).

This list may include up to three potential reviewers whom the principal investigator believes may have conflicts of interests. This selection must be briefly justified. If the reasons for exclusion are professionally and technically sound, the FWF will generally fulfil the request of the principal investigator and will exclude those reviewers from the review process.

Please note that the FWF does not wish to receive, nor will it consider a list of possible reviewers from principal investigators.

4. Compliance with legal requirements and standards of research integrity

The FWF would like to point out that the research institution must comply with all legal requirements and safety provisions (e.g., Federal Disabilities Act) that apply for the START project and obtain all the necessary permits (e.g., from the Ethics Commission, the Commission for Animal Experimentation, the Federal Monuments Authority Austria, or the relevant foreign authorities).

The research institution is also responsible for ensuring that the [guidelines for good scientific practice](#) of the Austrian Agency for Research Integrity (ÖAWI) are complied with when submitting the application and carrying out the project.

If there is reason to believe that there have been deviations from these standards, an investigation is to be carried out at the respective research institution or the [Austrian Agency for Research Integrity \(ÖAWI\)](#) is to be informed of this suspicion. At any rate, the research

institution must report any cases of suspected serious deviations to the ÖAWI. The FWF reserves the right to suspend, in part or in whole, any procedures related to applications or ongoing projects until these investigations have been concluded. For more detailed information, see [FWF procedure in cases of suspected scientific misconduct](#).

5. Publication of project data and results

The FWF would like to point out that should the project be approved, the FWF will publish on its website a summary of the project in German and English for public relations purposes—which must be sent to the FWF when returning the grant agreement—as well as the amount of funding granted and, on project completion, summaries of the final report of the project. The content of these summaries is to be written in such a way as to safeguard the legitimate interests of secrecy for reasons of national security and patent rights and to guarantee that trade secrets are protected appropriately. Guidelines for writing PR summaries can be found [here](#).

In addition, the FWF requires a data management plan (DMP) for all approved projects. This should also be sent to the FWF when returning the grant agreement. The template for the DMP can be viewed and downloaded [here](#).

For any kind of publication of project results (e.g., academic publications, research data, conference papers, and media reports), principal investigators must comply with the guidelines specified in the funding agreement on acknowledging the FWF as the funding institution and the FWF's [Open Access Policy](#).

Appendix 1: Notes and questions for reviewers in the START programme⁸

In all of its programmes, the FWF actively supports equal opportunities and equal treatment. The review of an application must not put researchers at a disadvantage for non-research-related reasons such as age, gender, etc. For example, the review of applications should not focus on the researcher's actual age, but on the relation between the researcher's previous research achievements and the length of their research career. Our commitment to equal opportunities also means taking into account breaks or delays in the principal investigator's research career (e.g., due to parental leave; long-term or chronic illness; disability; caring responsibilities; etc.), which may have led to publication gaps, unorthodox career paths, or limited international research experience.

Only the most important academic publications (no more than 10) and the most important additional research achievements (no more than 10) of the principal investigator are to be considered when evaluating the application. As a signatory to the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#), the FWF also emphasises that, in assessing research performance, reviewers should refrain from using journal-based metrics such as the Journal Impact Factor.

Please review the present proposal⁹, using the following six assessment criteria:

1) qualification of the applicant, 2) innovation and originality, 3) quality of the proposed research, 4) approach and feasibility, 5) ethics and gender, and 6) overall evaluation. For each of these criteria except 5) we ask you for both written comments and a rating on a scale from "excellent" to "poor". Please be aware, however, that the FWF's funding decision will be based primarily on referees' written assessments rather than the ratings assigned.

Please keep in mind that sections 1 and 2 will be forwarded to the applicant in its entirety and in anonymous form.

⁸ Further information on the FWF's corporate policy and mission or the application guidelines for START projects of the FWF can be found on our website at: <https://www.fwf.ac.at/en/about-the-fwf/corporate-policy> or <https://www.fwf.ac.at/en/research-funding/fwf-programmes/start-programme>.

⁹ The project proposal must meet the FWF's formal requirements. Please bear these in mind when writing your review. (Key formal requirements: 22 pages max. for the project description including figures and tables; 5 pages max. for the list of references; 3 pages max. for the academic CV, including a description of previous research achievements and the ten most important publications.)

Section 1:

1. Qualification of the applicant

How well is the applicant qualified to carry out the proposed research? How would you assess the academic qualifications of the applicant and their potential to independently managing a generously funded research project? In evaluating their qualification, please consider the respective career stage, taking into account unusual career paths and circumstances that may have slowed down their progress (e.g., parental leave, long-term or chronic illness, disability, caring responsibilities).

2. Innovation and originality

Is the proposed research innovative? Does it make an original contribution to its field?

3. Quality of the proposed research

Are the research questions formulated clearly? Are they timely, challenging, and likely to lead to relevant insights?

4. Approach and feasibility

Is the research design well-conceived, clearly formulated, and suitable for answering the research question(s)? Is there a well-organised work plan? Have the methods been chosen well and does the proposal describe them in sufficient detail?

5. Ethics and gender

Ethics: Have ethical considerations been addressed satisfactorily?

Gender: Applicants are required to address any relevant sex-specific and/or gender-related elements inherent in their research questions and/or research design. Please assess whether their treatment of these components is adequate.

6. Overall evaluation

What is your overall impression of the proposal? Specifically, what would you consider its key strengths and weaknesses? Please give reasons for your answers, taking as much space as you need.

Section 2: Optional recommendations for the principal investigator

If you are in favour of the project being funded, you may want to add to the formal assessment in Section 1 by making further and perhaps more informal comments or suggestions here. However, please note that these remarks, too, may impact on the FWF's funding decision, especially if they amount to substantive criticism of the project.

Section 3: Confidential remarks to the FWF

Please use this space to make any comments that you do not wish to be conveyed to the principal investigator. Feel free to also give us feedback about the evaluation process and your interactions with us.

Appendix 2: Template: Information on research institution(s) and justification of requested funding

The information on the research institution and the description of project finances must be presented in English using the structure below and attached to the project description as Annex 2. The costs must be broken down and adequately justified for each point below. The list and justification of the costs requested must be in accordance with the costs indicated in the *Cost breakdown* form.

a) Details on the research institution:

- Existing personnel (not financed by the FWF, usually the principal investigator and research personnel at the research institution(s))
- Existing infrastructure

(b) Information on the funding requested:

- Explain briefly why the personnel requested is needed (type(s) of requested position(s), job descriptions, extent of employment, and duration of involvement in the project);
- Explain briefly why the non-personnel cost applied for are justified (equipment, materials, travel, and other costs).

Listings and justifications for

- Personnel costs:
- Equipment costs:
- Material costs:
- Travel expenses:
- Other costs (including independent contracts for work and services):