

Application Guidelines¹ START-Programme

Programme aims

The fundamental aim of the programme is the promotion of young researchers 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 perform first-rate research in the future.

Top-class research is the result of teamwork by top-class people. The project funding, which amounts between EUR 800.000 up to EUR 1.2 Mio (around EUR 200.000 p.a.) is designed to provide financial security for a period of six years and to enable project leaders independently to build up or consolidate and lead research groups, thereby qualifying themselves for senior research positions (especially as university professors within Austria or abroad).

The programme is targeted at highly qualified researchers of any discipline. There are no quotas regulating the distribution of awards between subject areas. Priority will be given to applicants, who are in an early stage of their career and have not yet received any third-part funding in programmes with similar aims and comparable funding amounts², e.g. „ERC Starting or ERC Consolidator Grants“.

The START-programme is one of the most generously supported research programmes for individual researches working in Austria. As such, it attracts considerable media attention and thus contributes significantly to the understanding and acceptance of scientific research by society.

What may be applied for?

The goals and methodology of the project should be precisely described.

The project should be in the field of non-profit-oriented scientific/scholarly research and it must be planned for a duration of 72 months. Non-profit oriented scientific/scholarly research is research whose value is primarily related to the importance for the further development of research (scientific/scholarly work directed at enhancing our understanding of the field).

Any aspects of a research project that go beyond basic research (results of relevance to society, to the environment or to the economy) may be mentioned, although they play no part in the assessment of whether the project should be funded.

An interim evaluation after three years gives Prizewinners the chance to adapt their research to accommodate any changes in the field.

¹ Please note that all limits (e.g. on the number of pages, publications, enclosures) specified in these guidelines must be observed.

² The criterion third-part 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.

Who may apply?

Applications for grants in the START-Programme can only be submitted by individuals (natural persons).

- The call is open to any researcher with a PhD or MD degree; the doctoral degree must have been completed (award of certificate) no less than two years and no longer than eight years before the deadline for submission of applications (20th September 2018). Proven time spent raising children will be considered as interruptions to scientific/scholarly activity and up to three years will be allowed per child cared for by the applicant. Proven time spent on compulsory military or civilian service, time required to obtain corresponding specific qualifications in the relevant field (e.g. for receiving clinical qualifications) and long-term illness, will also be taken into account.
- The project supported by the project money must be carried out in Austria or under the responsibility of an Austrian research institution. The Austrian research institution must confirm that the necessary infrastructure to perform the research will be available for the entire duration of the project.
- Applicants must have the necessary scientific/scholarly qualification (postdoctoral experience), to perform the project. All applicants are expected to submit evidence of independent scientific/scholarly activity as well as an outstanding track record in the form of publications in international journals and/or internationally recognised contributions to the development of the field. In general, a period of at least one year's research abroad is also necessary and applicants should have already acquired competitive third-party funds independently³ since earning their doctorate.

The applicant's qualifications to carry out the research work should be demonstrated by publications in internationally recognised journals (the number of which should correspond to the stage the applicant has reached in his/her career). The following criteria are decisive in the assessment of the applicant's research qualifications and determine whether a review procedure is initiated:

- (1) Number: The number of publications should be commensurate with the applicant's career to date, but in any case it should meet the high requirements of the programme. Applicants should review the profiles of previous START recipients (<http://pf.fwf.ac.at/en/research-in-practice/project-finder>) or ERC Starting Grantees (<http://erc.europa.eu/projects-and-results/erc-funded-projects>) for guidance in this regard.
- (2) Independent scientific/scholarly activity: The applicant's independent contribution to each publication should be clearly recognisable. In the case of multiple authors, it must be clearly visible that the applicant's contribution was equal to that of the other authors. In the case of unequal contributions, the applicant must be listed as the first author, last author or corresponding author.
- (3) Peer review: All the publications listed (or more than half in the case of the humanities) must have been subjected to a quality assurance procedure in line with high international standards, normally meaning that the journals should be listed in the Web of Science, Scopus or the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). In the case of journals not listed in those databases, or monographs, edited volumes or contributions therein, or other publication types, the peer-review procedure must be

³ Research projects etc. for which the applicant is/was the main person responsible for the project in terms of both planning and execution.

documented on the publisher's website to which the applicant should provide a link. In the case of monographs, edited volumes or contributions therein, or other publication types where the policy is not documented on the publisher's website, or journals not listed in the Web of Science, Scopus or the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) the onus is on the applicant to provide evidence of the outlet's quality assurance policies.

- (4) International orientation: In the natural sciences, life sciences and social sciences, the majority of the applicant's publications listed must be in English. In the case of the humanities and cognate fields a majority of publications must have wider than national reach.

Where one or more of the above conditions are not met, the applicant must make a case for exemption to the rule which will then be considered by the FWF Executive Board.

Principal investigators must mention the ORCID persistent digital identifiers (<http://orcid.org/>) in the application forms.

What types of funding may be requested?

Funding is provided for project-specific costs only, i.e., personnel and non-personnel costs that are essential to carry out the project and that go beyond the resources made available from the "infrastructure" of the research institution. With the exception of projects submitted by independent researchers (see Appendix I), no personnel costs may be requested for project leaders.

The amount of funding requested must be between EUR 800,000 and EUR 1,200,000 for the entire funding period.

Notwithstanding the undertaking that an application with an identical content will be submitted to the ERC (see Appendix I, p. 8), double funding is not permitted. In other words, a project for which support is being requested may not receive full support from another funding source or under a different FWF Programme. Grants relating to the theme of the application that have been requested from or awarded by other funding agencies (e.g. the EU, ministries etc.) must be mentioned (see application forms).

How should applications be placed?

Deadline: Applications must be submitted to the FWF (Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung - Austrian Science Fund) in English by **20th September 2018**.

All parts of the free-form application, the abstracts and the enclosures (responses to reviewers etc.) must be submitted in 11pt type, line spacing 1.5.

A complete application must include the following parts:

1. **One-page academic abstract** in **English** comprising no more than 3,000 characters incl. spaces (no formulas or special characters). The academic abstract will be used to inform potential reviewers about the project. Applicants are therefore asked to address the following points as concisely as possible: 1) research questions/hypotheses, 2) scientific/scholarly innovation / originality of the project, 3) methods to be used, and 4) main researchers to be responsible for the project;
2. **Two one-page abstracts** for the FWF's **public relations (PR) work**: one in German, one in English. These abstracts are also subject to the limit of 3,000 characters incl. spaces and should contain the following information: 1) project title, 2) content of research project, 3) hypotheses, 4) methods, and 5) an explanation indicating what is

new and/or special about the project. The language of the PR abstracts should be comprehensible to non-specialist audiences and contain as few technical/specialist terms as possible;

3. **Completed forms** (necessary: application form, cost breakdown; programme specific data, optional: national research partners, international cooperation arrangements).
4. **Form Co-authors with the names (and contact details) of all persons** who have made substantial scientific/scholarly contributions to the application, either in its conception or composition. A brief description of the nature of each contribution should be included. In cases where no co-authors are involved, it is necessary to indicate this explicitly in the form.
5. A **free-form application** (A4 with numbered pages) composed of:
 - the project description: no more than 25 pages including tables and figures, no more than 11,250 words (including headings, footnotes, captions, etc.), but not including the table of contents;
 - the list of literature⁴ relevant to the project incl. list of abbreviations (no more than 6 pages);
 - the applicant's academic curriculum vitae (no more than 3 pages) a complete publication⁵ list of the applicant and a separate list of the 5-10 most important publications⁵ of the applicant.
6. **Letter of recommendation**⁶ from the head or the group leader of the research institute where the research project will be hosted.
7. Enclosures (see Annex 'Explanations and Definitions for the START-Programme')

The submission must be made online at <https://elane.fwf.ac.at>:

In order to submit applications online, users are first required to register at the address shown above. All of the necessary forms must be filled out online; additional files such as the free-form application, etc. can be uploaded. For additional information, please see the user's manual available at the address shown above.

1. Required forms:

- Application form
- Programme specific data
- Cost breakdown
- Academic abstract in English
- Co-authors

2. Optional forms (to be filled out as necessary):

- National research partner
- International cooperation arrangement

⁴ The list of literature must include the following information: All authors, complete titles, journal, year and page numbers. It is also necessary to provide each publication's DOI address or another persistent identifier, e.g. the PubMed ID, arxiv ID, URL, URN or ISBN.

⁵ Publication lists must include the following information: All authors, complete titles, journal, year and page numbers. For each publication, either the DOI address (Digital Object Identifier – see <http://www.doi.org/>) or another persistent identifier (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persistent_identifier) should be indicated; for publications with more than 20 authors, an "et al." reference can be used. In addition, the publications should be freely accessible in line with the FWF's Open Access Policy. This requirement applies to all publications from ongoing or completed FWF projects.

⁶ If preferred: The person writing the recommendation letter may send it directly to the FWF Secretariat.

3. Required file uploads

- **proposal.pdf** (consisting of the free-form application including a project-related bibliography, academic CV and publication lists of the applicant, separate list of 5-10 most important publications plus any collaboration letters up to a max. of 3)
- **pr_abstract_deu.docx** and **pr_abstract_eng.docx** (project abstracts for PR purposes in English and German, each in a separate Word file)
- **recommendation.pdf** (letter of recommendation⁷ from the head or the group leader of the research institute where the research project will be hosted)

4. Optional file uploads (general annex)

- **Annex_Overview_Revision.pdf** (overview of all changes made in the resubmitted application)
- **Annex_Revision.pdf** (responses to reviews or review excerpts **in a separate file for each review or excerpt**; Annex_Revision_A.pdf/doc / Annex_Revision_B.pdf/doc etc.)
- **Annex_Follow.pdf** (report on previous project's results if the proposal is for the continuation of a prior FWF project)
- **Annex_Reviewers.pdf** (list of reviewers who should not be contacted)

Once the application has been completed, a PDF cover sheet can be generated. This cover sheet must be signed, stamped, and sent to the FWF by conventional mail by **20th September** at the latest (date of postmark). The application is not officially considered to be "submitted" until the FWF receives the cover sheet. Alternatively, the signed/stamped cover sheet can be scanned in, signed using the applicant's qualified electronic signature⁸ (e.g. Handysignatur) and sent to the FWF by e-mail (office@fwf.ac.at) at **20th September 2018**. Please note that a signed/stamped version of the cover sheet without a qualified electronic signature will not suffice!

International review is performed on the basis of the narrative text. All decisions are taken by the Board of the FWF based on recommendations of the International Jury for the START and Wittgenstein Programme. In order to enable this international peer review, applications must be submitted in English.

Note: Where additional funding applications are submitted to other FWF Programmes, those applications must differ substantially from the planned START project in terms of research questions and objectives. Applications which include work already proposed for a START project and are excessively similar to the START project will not be considered by the FWF Board. The sole exception to this rule is the Elise Richter Programme, where an application which is substantially similar in content as long as the programme-specific guidelines are observed.

The project description⁹ must address the following points (see also last page – Questions to referees)

1. Scientific/Scholarly aspects

- aims (hypotheses or research questions)
 - relationship to the international research work in the field (international status of the research)
 - explanation of how the project could break new ground (innovative aspects)

⁷ If preferred: The person writing the recommendation letter may send it directly to the FWF Secretariat.

⁸ <https://www.digital.austria.gv.at/mobile-phone-signature>

⁹ Hyperlinks in the project description or in enclosures to contents for which a login/password is required will be disregarded.

- importance of the expected results for the discipline (based on the narrative text)
- methods
- work plan, time plan as well as strategies for dissemination of results for the first three years and a brief sketch of the plans for the subsequent three years
- cooperation arrangements (national and international)
- Where ethical issues¹⁰ have to be considered in the proposed research project: All potential ethical, security-related or regulatory aspects of the proposed research project and the planned handling of those issues must be discussed in a separate paragraph. In particular, the benefits and burdens arising from the experiments as well as their effects on the test subjects/objects should be explained in detail. Applicants must also provide a brief explanation in cases where no ethical issues have to be taken into account.

2. Human resources

- academic qualifications of the researchers involved
- importance of the project for the career development of the applicant

3. Additional aspects (if applicable)

- implications for other branches of science
- effects with implications beyond the specific research field.

4. Financial aspects

- information on the research institution:
 - available infrastructure
 - available personnel not financed by the FWF (usually the project leader and co-applicants);
- information on the support requested:
 - justification for the personnel to be assigned to the project (type of position[s], description of nature of work, length and extent of involvement in the project)
 - concise justification for non-personnel costs (equipment, material, travel and other costs)

5. Academic curricula vitae (CV) no more than 3 pages and complete publication list of the applicant

The following information must be provided:

- Personal information, address(es) and, if applicable, web site
- Main areas of research
- Description of academic career and positions held to date (with brief description of reasons for any career breaks)
- (where applicable) Highest academic recognition received (no more than 5 in each of the following categories: most important invited lectures; most important academic awards received; most important peer review activities, most important editorships and/or most important memberships in academic organizations)
- (where applicable) Most important research projects funded in the past (**no more than 5**)¹¹
- (where applicable) Names and institutions of key international cooperation partners in the last 5 years.

¹⁰ For orientation purposes, applicants may wish to review the document "[Ethics for researchers](#)" published by the European Commission or "[The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#)". In cases of uncertainty, researchers can also contact their more experienced colleagues or the person/department responsible for ethical issues at their respective research institution.

¹¹ Please indicate only those (peer-reviewed) research projects in which the applicant is/was the main person responsible for the project in terms of both planning and execution. For each project, please provide the following information: Project title, funding agency, project duration (from/to) and amount of funding granted.

Publication list⁵

- List of all published or accepted scholarly/scientific publications (journals, monographs, anthologies, contributions to anthologies, proceedings, research data, etc.), broken down into a) peer-reviewed publications and b) non-peer-reviewed publications;
- Separate listing of the **5-10 most important** scholarly/scientific publications

APPENDIX I: Explanations and Definitions (START-Programme)

1 Application criteria

1.1 Commitment to submit an application with the same content within the ERC-Starting Grant scheme

With the submission of a START application, the applicant commits him- or herself – provided that there is no formal reason why this may not be done – to submitting an application with the same content within the next possible call¹² for ERC-Starting Grants. Further information about the ERC Funding Schemes may be found at <http://erc.europa.eu/funding-schemes>.

1.2 Double funding is not permitted

Any other grants relating to the theme of the application that have been requested from or awarded by the FWF or other funding agencies (e.g. the EU, OeNB, government ministries etc.) must be mentioned (see application forms).

Please note that individual applicants are not permitted to apply for more than one START-project per call.

2 Costs that may be requested (project-specific costs)

2.1 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). In addition, a part-time contract of employment (DV 50%, “studentische MitarbeiterInnen”) may be requested for people who have not yet completed a master’s or diploma programme (Diplom) in the relevant subject.

The current FWF salary scheme (“[personnel costs and salary scale](#)” or for graduates of medicine in Austria “[Personnel costs / Salaries for Graduates of Medical Studies in Austria](#)”) indicates the salaries that may be requested. (<http://www.fwf.ac.at/en/research-funding/personnel-costs/>)

The FWF grants an annual increase to compensate for inflation; this is applied automatically to all contracts of employment in START projects that are valid when the increase is effected.

The reasoning for the personnel requested should contain the following:

- a description of the nature of each employee’s work;
- each employee’s extent of involvement (part-time contracts are permitted). Please note that it is not permitted to apply for PhD student positions where the extent of employment is greater than 75% (which corresponds to 30 hours per week).

2.2 Applications from independent researchers (“Selbstantragstellung”):

The FWF defines an “independent researcher” as a project leader whose salary is to be paid from the funding provided for the project. A pre-condition for this is that the candidate will perform the planned research in Austria or under the responsibility of an Austrian research institution.

All applicants are permitted to request funding (or partial funding) for their own salaries regardless of whether they have a fixed-term or indefinite contract of employment when the

¹² Applicants are requested to submit their ERC Starting Grant proposal with similar content at the next possible deadline (October 2018).

application is submitted. However, the FWF can only provide funding for the researcher's salary under the following conditions at the time when the funds are actually used:

- a) The researcher must not have an existing contract of employment or any regular income exceeding the minimum living wage in Austria.
- b) If the researcher is in part-time employment, the amount of the researcher's salary will be adapted to reflect his/her actual extent of employment in the FWF project.
- c) For researchers who are self-employed at the time when the funds are used for their salary, the personnel costs or salary amount to be requested must not exceed 50% of the full rate for independent researchers.

Income in addition to full-time employment (e.g. resulting from lecturer contracts) is allowed either up to 5 hours per week or up to the legally defined limit for marginal part-time employment (geringfügige Beschäftigung), provided that these additional occupations serve to further the principal investigator's career.

The FWF must be informed immediately (even prior to a funding approval) of any changes in the extent of employment.

FWF employee responsible for legal questions:

Ulrike Varga (Tel.: +43-1-5056740-8841, e-mail: ulrike.varga@fwf.ac.at), in particular for questions relating to contracts of employment, independent contracts for work and services, marginal employment, and residence permits for project employees from outside the European Economic Area.

Salary levels to be requested by independent researchers (prorated in the case of part-time employment)

Independent researchers within the START-programme may request payment at the 'Senior PostDoc' level.

If an independent researcher is to work at a research institution that is subject to the 2002 Universities Act (UG2002) or that has concluded a corresponding agreement with the FWF, the salary to be requested is that for a contract of employment for a "Senior PostDoc". In all other cases, a grant to an independent researcher ("Forschungssubvention - Senior PostDoc") should be requested (see the current [salary table](#) or for graduates of medicine in Austria "Personnel costs / Salaries in EURO for Graduates of Medical Studies in Austria").

To ensure the correct form of employment, applicants should consult the FWF Secretariat ([contact persons](#) in the appropriate departments) before submitting an application.

2.3 Equipment costs

Equipment may only be requested if it is specifically required for the project concerned.

In this context, "equipment" includes research instruments, apparatus, 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 licences, industrial property rights and licences derived from such rights, whose acquisition cost per item (including value-added tax [VAT]) exceeds the amount specified in Article 13 of the Austrian Income Tax Act 1988 (Einkommenssteuergesetz – EStG; Federal Law Gazette No. 400/1988), which is currently €400 (including VAT, unless the research institution is entitled to deduct VAT).

For items of equipment which are required specifically for the project and whose cost (including VAT) is €24,000 or higher, applicants must confirm with their signatures on the application form ("Affirmation of applicant") that they have 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 and any interest in shared use have been explored. Applicants must also confirm that they are aware of any possible costs that could arise as a result of use, service, maintenance and repairs.

Note: The principal investigator is to instruct his/her research institution to order the equipment and effect payment accordingly. In all equipment purchases, the research institution's procurement guidelines are to be observed. Each item of equipment is to be recorded in inventory and the acquisition costs are to be reimbursed in accordance with the relevant agreement between the research institution and the FWF.

Questions relating to equipment:

Contact person in the relevant [specialist department](#) at the FWF

2.4 Material costs

This category encompasses consumables and smaller pieces of equipment where the cost per item is below EUR 400 including VAT. The calculation of requested material costs should be justified with reference to the schedule, work plan and experimental plan. Experience from previous projects should be taken into account.

2.5 Travel costs

Funding may be requested for project-specific travel and accommodation, field work, expeditions, etc. Applicants are to provide a detailed travel (cost) plan broken down by project participant. This plan must indicate when (in which year of the project), where, for what purpose and for how long a specific project member (or members) will be travelling.

The calculation of travel and accommodation costs should be based on the federal regulations governing travel costs (RGV). The current RGV rates applicable to travel in Austria and abroad are provided in the following document:

<http://www.fwf.ac.at/fileadmin/files/Dokumente/Downloads/bgbl.pdf>

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

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

2.6 Other costs

- Independent contracts for work and services (costs for work of clearly defined scope and content assigned to individuals, provided that it is justifiable and economical)
- Costs that cannot be included under personnel, equipment, material or travel costs, such as:
 - Coverage of costs for the use of research facilities, e.g. costs incurred due to the project-specific use of available equipment (project-specific “equipment time”) or large research facilities; in any case, offers from potential suppliers must be submitted. Where the costs exceed EUR 10.000,00 (not including VAT) over the entire term of the project, each offer must be accompanied by the corresponding calculation basis for costs from the research institution involved in the project. 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.) as well as a confirmation indicating that the offer does not include any infrastructure-related costs such as equipment depreciation, supplementary charges for overhead, costs of research premises, etc.;
 - costs for laboratory animals required by and used in the project;

- costs for project-specific work carried out outside the applicant's research institution (e.g. for analysis work performed elsewhere, for interviews, for sample collection, for preparation of thin slices etc.). Offers should be supplied;
 - costs for the disposal of hazardous waste;
 - costs for honoraria to test persons.
- When planning project budgets, please observe the [FWF's Open Access Policy](#), including Section VI, "Open Research Data". This means that it is necessary to allocate the necessary funds over the project's duration to ensure the preparation, archiving, Open Access and later use of research data in repositories (depending on the research field).

Please note that if a START Project is funded it is possible to request additional payments to cover the costs of publishing the project's results (see the [FWF's Open Access Policy](#)) in refereed journals or other media. Repayment is made following publication, so publication costs should not be requested in advance.

3 Non-permissible costs

3.1 Infrastructure

This category includes all facilities that are required for the normal operations of the research institution (such as buildings, installations, communication facilities and so on).

3.2 Large-scale contracts for work and services performed by persons who have already served six years in FWF projects

The conclusion of large-scale (over EUR 4,500) contracts for work and services with individuals who have already been funded by the FWF for six years by means of contracts of employment in FWF projects is not permitted.

3.3 Dissemination activities

Funding for publication costs cannot be requested in FWF applications for research projects. However, the FWF does provide additional funding for peer-reviewed publications upon request up to three years after the end of an approved project. For further information, please visit <http://www.fwf.ac.at/en/research-funding/fwf-programme/peer-reviewed-publications/>

4 Cooperation arrangements and national research partners

4.1 National and international cooperation arrangements:

All forms of research collaboration directly related to the project are considered to be cooperation arrangements. Such arrangements are expected to create added value for the project and must work to the advantage of all parties involved.

The FWF assumes that the costs arising from scholarly collaboration at each research institution will be borne by the respective cooperation partner.

In the course of such arrangements, funds can only be transferred to a cooperation partner (including partners abroad) in cases where they cover clearly defined and limited work assignments or services (as mentioned in Section 2.6) and where such assignments or services are directly necessary in order to carry out the Austrian project.

This rule does not apply to [cooperation arrangements with researchers from developing countries](#).

All cooperation arrangements (national and/or international) planned within the proposed project should be detailed in the free-form application. In the case of individual cooperation arrangements, it is necessary to specify the persons with whom project members will cooperate as well as the object of the planned cooperation arrangement(s), i.e. their specific contribution to the project.

Each of the planned international cooperation arrangements on an individual basis (even within the framework of international programmes such as COST, EUREKA, or EU framework programmes) must be included with all relevant information in the "International cooperation arrangements¹³" form.

4.2) National research partners:

National research partners are persons who work at a different Austrian research institution and who will consume resources at that research institution in the form of personnel, equipment and/or other costs in the course of the project. These costs are settled between the research institution and the FWF and need not be invoiced to the project's principal investigator. For such partnerships, applicants are to fill out the form "National research partners at other research institutions". The form must also be signed by the head of the research institution in question or by a person authorised to sign for the institution.

5 Forms

The structured part of the application consists of forms (application form, Programme specific data, Cost breakdown, form naming co-authors and supplementary forms).

5.1 All required forms must be completed in their entirety.

In order for the application to be legally binding, the FWF requires a copy of the "Affirmation of applicant" and the "Affirmation of applicant's research institution" form and, if applicable, a copy of the "Affirmation of national research partner(s)" and the "Affirmation of the national research partner's (partners') research institution" with original signatures and an original stamp or seal (elane cover sheet).

In addition the commitment to submit an identical ERC-Starting Grant within the next possible call must also be signed by the applicant.

5.2 Form co-authors

All persons who have made substantial scientific/scholarly contributions to the application, either at its conception or during its writing, should be named. A brief description of the nature of each contribution should be included; where there are no co-authors, applicants should state this explicitly on the form.

6 Enclosures

6.1 required

- A letter of recommendation from the head or the group leader of the research institute, where the project will be hosted. The person writing the letter may send it directly to the FWF Secretariat.

6.2 optional

- Evidence of periods of child care, compulsory military or civilian service, or time spent obtaining qualifications/training relevant to the field of research or for long-term illness should be submitted if the maximum permitted time since conferment of the doctoral degree is exceeded.
- If applicable, form(s) for international cooperation arrangements (letters of intent from each cooperation partner may also be enclosed).

Revision of rejected applications

- In cases where a project is revised and resubmitted after previous rejection by the FWF, the applicant must indicate that it is a resubmission (e.g. in a footnote) at the beginning of

¹³ Only those international cooperation arrangements which are discussed in the free-form project description are to be indicated on the "International cooperation arrangements" form.

the free-form project description.

- Applicants resubmitting projects are required to provide the FWF with an accompanying letter containing an overview of all changes made in the resubmitted application; this overview will not be passed on to the reviewers.
- In addition, the applicant must include brief comments on each review (with each set of comments in **a separate document**). These comments should address the suggestions and criticism expressed in each review of the previous application and point out the changes made on that basis. Such comments 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 appropriately and will also be counted toward the list of undesired reviewers for the resubmission.
- Recommendation: As a rule, new reviewers are also called in to review resubmitted projects. Therefore, it may be helpful to include brief notes on modifications made as a direct result of reviewer suggestions in an appropriate form in the project description (i.e., in parentheses or footnotes).

In cases where no substantial changes are made in a resubmitted application, the application may be rejected by the FWF Executive Board without review.

Please note that the FWF will disregard any enclosures above and beyond those described.

7 Application processing¹⁴

A formal check of all applications submitted within the deadline is undertaken by the FWF Secretariat. Please note that no alterations may be made to the application after the submission deadline. Only correctable errors and problems communicated by the FWF can be corrected within no more than 10 days after receipt of an official notification of the FWF. If the applicant fails to do so, the FWF's Executive Board will reject the applications without subjecting them to review.

All applications that meet the relevant research and formal criteria will be sent to reviewers (invariably working outside Austria) nominated by the FWF Board and the International Jury.

In cases where the application is a revised version of a previously rejected application (resubmission), the FWF will generally request a second review from those reviewers who provided constructive criticism on the previous application. Reviewers who gave entirely positive or negative comments without qualification will generally not be contacted for a second review. However, please note that all resubmissions are also evaluated by new reviewers.

Decisions on the award of START grants are taken by the Board of the FWF based on recommendations of the International Jury. The recommendation of the Jury is based on the results of the international peer review and an interview, which will take place on the first day of the annual meeting of the International Jury. The meeting of the Jury usually lasts two days. The International Jury prepares a short-list of promising START candidates before the meeting (generally three to four weeks in advance). These candidates are invited to an interview during the Jury meeting. At the same time, applicants who are not on the shortlist are informed of the decision and receive the reviews of their applications, in anonymous form. The International Jury reaches its list of recommendations in a closed session, i.e. in the absence of the FWF Board. Applicants are informed of the decisions in writing.

For a positive decision at least three reviews are needed.

¹⁴ The criteria for the selection of international peer reviewers, standardized justifications for rejections as well as the rules regarding bias, conflicts of interest, and the composition of expert juries and boards are discussed in the document "[General Principles of the Decision-Making Procedure](#)".

Proposal bans: Applications that are rejected for reason "C5" will be barred from resubmission for at least 12 months from the date of the decision and cannot be resubmitted during that period. Application that are revised and resubmitted twice and are rejected again upon the third submission will also be barred from resubmission for at least 12 months from the date of the decision, except in the case of applications that are rejected a third time for reason "C1" or "C2".

7.1 Suggested reviewers:

Applicants may include (on paper and electronically, in Word format) a list of reviewers who should not be requested to review the application because of possible conflicts of interest ("negative list"):

Negative list: Applicants may exclude up to three potential reviewers from the review procedure if they feel that competition or fundamental differences in ideology would make it difficult for these persons to judge the applications objectively. If the grounds for exclusion can be verified, the Executive Board will generally fulfill such requests. The negative list must include a brief justification for excluding the persons in question.

Reviewers are considered to have a potential conflict of interest if:

- they stand to gain professionally, financially or personally from the approval or rejection of the application;
- they have published, cooperated, served on professional boards or other bodies involving frequent or regular meetings, or worked at the same research institution with the applicant or any co-applicants (including project employees) in the last five years (see also below);
- they have fundamental differences of scientific opinion with the applicant or any co-applicants (including project employees);
- any other close professional or personal ties exist between the reviewers and applicants/co-applicants (including project employees) which may give rise to suspicions of bias or of conflicts of interest in the eyes of uninvolved third parties.

Please note that the FWF does not wish to receive suggestions for possible referees from applicants. Any such suggestions (i.e. a "positive list" of referees) will be disregarded.

8 Additional information

The FWF draws attention to the fact that applicants are required to comply with all valid legal provisions (e.g. Austrian law relating to the equal treatment of disabled persons) and safety regulations and to obtain any permits required for their research (e.g. from the Ethics Commission, the Commission for Animal Experimentation, the Department for the Protection of Ancient Monuments or the corresponding authorities abroad).

The [Guidelines for Good Scientific Practice](#) published by the Austrian Agency for Research Integrity (OeAWI) must be observed in any case.

Where a breach of these standards is suspected, the case will be investigated by the ombudsperson of the research institution responsible or by the Austrian Agency for Research Integrity. The FWF reserves the right to suspend any procedures related to applications or ongoing projects partly or entirely until such investigations have been concluded.

9 General remarks

Applicants should be aware that in the event that funding is granted, the German and English project summaries for public relations (PR) purposes as well as the amount of funding provided and (subsequently) the summaries of the final project report will be published on the FWF's web site. The principal investigator should ensure that these summaries are written in such a way that they do not lead to restrictions on any possible patent applications that might arise from the project.

In the presentation and publication of all project results, grant recipients are to comply with the requirements regarding the acknowledgement of FWF funding and with the FWF's open access policy.

Appendix II: Guidelines for FWF Reviewers “START Programme”¹⁵

In all of its programmes, the FWF actively supports equal opportunities and equal treatment. The review of an application must not put the applicant at a disadvantage for non-scientific/non-scholarly reasons such as age, gender, etc. For example, the assessment of research proposals should not be based on the applicants’ actual age, but instead on the individual circumstances relating to the duration of their scientific/scholarly careers and previous research achievements. For the FWF, ensuring equal opportunities also involves accounting for unavoidable delays in the academic careers of applicants (e.g. longer qualification periods, gaps in publication activity, or less time spent abroad for family reasons). When preparing your review, please keep in mind that your comments in Section I will be forwarded in their entirety to the applicant (without including your name).

It is the FWF’s duty to ensure the best possible use of public-sector funds in the field of basic research. On the basis of the project application requirements defined by the FWF; reviewers should be able to provide brief comments on the following aspects of each application.

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

1. Scientific/Scholarly quality of the applicant (based on the academic age) and potential to independently build up or consolidate her/his own research group with special attention to strengths and weaknesses
2. Scientific/scholarly quality of the proposal (including innovative aspects and originality) with special attention to strengths and weaknesses
3. Approaches/methods and feasibility of the proposal with special attention to strengths and weaknesses
4. Ethical issues
5. Overall evaluation with regard to key strengths and weaknesses and final funding recommendation

Section 2 (confidential remarks to the FWF)

Any other comments to the FWF:

¹⁵ Information about the FWF’s ‘Corporate Policy’ and a copy of the ‘Guidelines for START Applications’ may be found on the FWF’s website ((<http://www.fwf.ac.at/en/about-the-fwf/corporate-policy/> or (<http://www.fwf.ac.at/en/about-the-fwf/corporate-policy/>)).