

Disruptive Innovation – Early Career Seed Money

A Funding Programme of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW) and of the Austrian Science Fund (FWF)

Objectives of the programme

Social progress thrives on scientific and academic breakthroughs. Disruptive innovation, i.e. completely innovative ideas, approaches or experiments which can hardly be integrated into the scientific or social environment at the time they develop, typically stand at the beginning of such breakthroughs, often undertaken by young, outstanding, creative and productive scientists at an early stage of their careers. The significance of disruptive ideas often becomes evident only after several years or decades; in identifying and supporting such ideas traditional funding tools have limits. New disruptive ideas and approaches may also arise from transfer of new technologies or know-how from abroad to existing research fields and are thus eligible for funding under this programme.

"Disruptive Innovation - Early Career Seed Money" is a joint funding programme of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW) and the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) to facilitate the implementation of unconventional, innovative and maybe even very risky ideas of an uncertain outcome. It is financed by the Zukunft Österreich fund (FZÖ). Funding will be interdisciplinary and across thematic areas, with seed money being made available as flexible grants that may be used freely. Low-threshold application and an unconventional selection procedure are aimed to help radically new ideas achieve a breakthrough.

Target group

The target group is outstanding young researchers not more than three years after their doctoral degree, whose projects suggest extraordinary potential of disruptive innovation. There is complete disciplinary and thematic freedom. Projects from all scientific disciplines in the field of basic research are eligible for funding. In particular, interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary research approaches and artistic-scientific approaches are invited to submit proposals (however, this kind of approaches are no prerequisite for an application).

Application requirements

- Applications must be submitted individually (in person) by the researcher managing the project).
- Only one application may be filed per person.

- Exclusion of multiple funding: no funding must have been granted for the proposed project earlier. Applications with other funding agencies must be disclosed. Approvals by another funding agency must be notified immediately and will lead to exclusion of the application from the procedure.
- The following are eligible for funding:
 - scientists who completed their **doctoral studies**¹ not more than 36 months ago (calculated from their doctoral viva voce (*Rigorosum*), cut-off date: 31 October 2023). Pursuant to the [Guidelines of the Austrian Science Fund \(FWF\)](#) times of parental or other leave of absence of up to 36 months due to illness, nursing duties, etc. may be taken into account.
 - and are affiliated with a research institution in Austria.
- Upon submission of the application, applicants must present approval from the research institute at which the project is intended to be carried out (declaration of consent). In the case of a change in the course of the process, approval from the new research institution must be evidenced by presentation of a declaration of consent.
- The applicants are prepared to pro-actively contribute to the public presentation of the programme and to attend related events.

Funding term

Funding will be granted for a maximum term of 12 months.

Amount of grant

Grants will range from EUR 25,000 to EUR 75,000 per project. The total funding amount is EUR 2 million. Funds can be used freely, including for financing travel and accommodation costs in Austria and abroad, cost of materials, fees for use of laboratories, research equipment ("bench fees") and the like, or one's own staff costs (the latter for a limited term of six months in accordance with the staff cost rates of the relevant research institution).

Procedure

The call for proposals is open to all topics and is published in all of Austria. Applications and the selection process, including the selection weekend, will be in English. The programme is being implemented by ÖAW and FWF jointly.

Call begins: **8 September 2023**

Deadline for submission: **31 October 2023**

Info webinars: **Tuesday, 19 September 2023, 2 to 3 p.m. (German, [Zoom link](#))**
Tuesday, 3 October 2023, 2 to 3 p.m. (English, [Zoom link](#))

Application

Applications must be made by the applicant by email to the Department of Research Funding - National and International Programmes of ÖAW (programmmanagement@oeaw.ac.at).

¹ Doctoral degrees in sciences, medicine and arts will be accepted.

The following must be submitted:

(1) the "**Proposal**" application form completed in full (cover sheet, project bibliography, a description of the project of not more than 3 pages (for the template see the application documents);

The description of the project must address the following questions in its core:

- What question/problem does your research address?
- How does your idea challenge/overcome conventional approaches/methods or techniques?
- How could your research idea potentially lead to transformative change and be paradigm shifting?
- Are ethical, sex & gender-related aspects sufficiently considered?

(2) the cost sheet, completed in full;

(3) documents of the applicant consisting of:

- a standardised curriculum vitae (for the template see the application documents);
- doctoral certificate including date of the doctoral viva voce (*Rigorosum*);
- one-page statement (Letter of Reference) regarding the applicant and the proposed project idea by a mentor (a person at a more advanced career level chosen by the applicant) describing in what way the grant would have a positive impact on the applicant's career development (for the template see the application documents);
- a signed declaration of consent from the research institution (for the template see the application documents);

= 1 file in pdf format per applicant

Selection process

- The selection will be made by an international jury possessing broad specialist expertise and experience in the assessment of highly innovative or highly original research ideas.
- Preselection of a maximum of 70 applications from among all applications received within the deadline which meet the formal application requirements (see application requirements) by the jury for the selection weekend. Selection criteria: potential of the project idea and the applicant with regard to career development.
- Selection weekend of the applicants and the jury from 8 to 10 March 2024 in the form of short presentations of the projects and an extensive exchange by way of structured debates.
- Jury decision on approx. 20 projects which will be proposed directly for funding and another 20 projects which will be nominated for a lottery basket, from which projects will be drawn at random until the funding total of EUR 2 million will be used up.
- Announcement of the award decision and notification of the applicants is planned for mid-March 2024.

Data protection and rules of good scientific practice

By taking part in this call applicants acknowledge and agree that the related data and documents will be forwarded to the jury members. The data and documents will be forwarded for the purpose of evaluation of the application and decision-making with regard to the award of grants (see also the [Data Protection Information of ÖAW](#)). ÖAW abides by the [Guidelines of Good Scientific Practice](#) of the Austrian Agency for Research Integrity (ÖAWI). **All applications will be checked for plagiarism using Similarity (Turnitin)**. Violations of the rules of good scientific practice will result in immediate exclusion of the application.

Funding modalities (excerpt)

- (1) Selected projects must start not later than three months after transmission of the grant letter and will have a maximum project term of twelve months. The grant will be based on conclusion of a funding agreement with ÖAW.
- (2) The programme management must immediately be informed of any changes to the project plan. Changes which have not been reported will result in discontinuation of the project. The programme management will decide at their discretion whether to accept changes or to have them evaluated externally or, in the worst case, to reject them.
- (3) After completion of funding, a final project report must be submitted, which will undergo evaluation.

Application documents

Call for proposals

Templates:

- (1) **Application form/Proposal** – DisrInnovation_(1) Proposal (template)
- (2) **Budget** – DisrInnovation_(2) Budget (template)
- (3a) **Curriculum vitae** – DisrInnovation_(3a) CV Guidelines
- (3b) **Declaration of consent** – DisrInnovation_(3b) Signature (template)
- (3c) **Mentor statement/Letter of Reference** – DisrInnovation_(3c) Reference-Letter (template)

Contact

If you have questions regarding the call for proposals, the application process or implementation of funding in the case of a successful application, please contact:

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