

# FWF Funding for Incoming Researchers

**Below we have compiled some basic information on three FWF programs that are particularly suited for researchers who want to come to Austria and work independently, funded by an FWF research grant: ESPRIT (for younger postdoctoral researchers), ASTRA (advanced postdocs), and FWF Principal Investigator Projects (all career stages). For all three it is necessary to find an institution (university or other eligible research institution) to host the project.**

The [Austrian Science Fund \(FWF\)](#) is Austria's national funding agency for basic research, financing projects at Austrian universities and other institutions involved in basic research. The FWF's funding portfolio consists of different programs for stand-alone projects, collaborative formats, national and international projects, as well as programs for early career researchers. Here you can find basic information on three FWF programs that are particularly suited for researchers who want to come to Austria.

## ESPRIT

The ESPRIT program (Early-Stage Program: Research – Innovation – Training) is intended to improve the skills and support the professional development of researchers from all disciplines early in their research careers by giving them the opportunity to lead an independent research project.

### Target group

This funding program is aimed at highly qualified postdoc-level researchers of all disciplines in the early stages of their scientific career.

### Funding goals

ESPRIT promotes career development by giving junior researchers the opportunity to act as principal investigator in an independent research project. The main objectives of the ESPRIT program are:

- Funding excellent, innovative research
- Recruiting, retaining, and winning back outstanding researchers to strengthen Austria's research institutions
- Supporting outstanding women researchers
- Career and skill development (development/establishment of an independent research profile)
- Improving career prospects (boosting competitiveness through publications, collaborations, and increased visibility)

### Funding period and funding amount

- Funding period: 36 months
- Funding amount:
  - Principal investigator's salary (current senior postdoc rate)
  - Project-specific costs from €45,000 (flat rate) to €75,000 (upon request, if justifiable)

## Requirements

- The applicant must have the academic qualifications needed to lead the proposed research project.
- Completed doctoral degree awarded no more than 5 years prior to the time of application
- A mentor to support the principal investigator's scientific and professional development
- Project to be carried out at an Austrian research institution with the necessary infrastructure

## Approval

- Decided by the Scientific Board based on an international review process
- In the case of equal qualifications and equal quality of proposals: Women will be given priority in the selection process
- Five approval meetings per year
- Rolling submissions using the online application portal [elane](#)

Detailed information: [ESPRIT](#)

## FWF ASTRA Awards

Attracting and retaining particularly talented researchers in international competition: In July 2024, the FWF launched a new career funding program called the FWF ASTRA Awards. This funding gives advanced postdocs in Austria the opportunity to make the leap to the top of their research field.

### Target group

The funding program is aimed at successful, internationally visible researchers from all disciplines, including arts-based research, who already have experience with independent research work ([R3 level](#)).

### Funding goals

The highly endowed FWF ASTRA Awards offer outstanding researchers the conditions they need to conduct long-term research projects at a top international level, consolidate their individual research profiles, and acquire the necessary qualifications for academic leadership positions. ASTRA has the following key objectives:

- Funding excellent, innovative research, including through the development or establishment of new research fields and/or approaches
- Attracting and retaining internationally visible researchers to help increase the international attractiveness of Austrian research institutions
- Supporting outstanding women researchers
- Supporting the consolidation of the principal investigators' academic careers and the achievement of the qualifications needed for academic leadership positions, especially senior faculty positions

- Establishing long-term career prospects through the integration of researchers and their research fields at the research institutions, creating sustainable added value for both researchers and research institutions.
- The program includes a number of measures for the advancement of women: Half of the FWF ASTRA Awards are given to women; tenure package; career coaching and networking measures, child allowances

### **Funding period and funding amount**

- From €500,000 up to a maximum of €1 million for a period of five years
- An additional €200,000 tenure package for women ASTRA principal investigators who are granted a position with a permanent employment commitment upon fulfillment of a qualification agreement (e. g. tenure-track position) or a permanent academic leadership position (professorship or equivalent position) within the first three years of the project term

### **Requirements**

- The applicant must have the academic qualifications needed to lead the proposed research project.
- Applicants must have a doctoral degree awarded at least 2 and not more than 9 years prior to September 30 of the year of submission. Possible exceptions are defined in the Application Guidelines (e.g., parental leave periods). In the field of arts-based research, researchers who do not hold a doctoral degree can also apply. The prerequisite for eligibility is proof of at least 2 to a maximum of 9 years of relevant experience in arts-based research according to international standards.
- Individuals who already hold a tenured professorship (or an equivalent leadership position at a non-university research institution) at the time of application or who have already accepted an appointment to a tenured professorship are not eligible to apply.
- Researchers can submit a maximum of two applications to the ASTRA program. For this reason, applicants should bear in mind that, according to the definition of the target group, they should already have experience in independent research work, i.e., have acquired competitive third-party funding after their doctorate, gained extended (at least 3 months of continuous) research experience abroad, or published academic papers without a dissertation supervisor.
- For further details, please see the Application Guidelines.

### **Approval**

- Decision by the Scientific Board based on a recommendation by an international jury; recommendations are made on the basis of international peer review and a hearing.
- Projects presented at the hearing that do not receive an ASTRA Award will be funded as 3-year Principal Investigator Projects with a maximum of €450,000 each (Merit Awards).
- Proposals can be submitted during the application period using the online application portal [elane](#).

### **Detailed information: [FWF ASTRA AWARDS](#)**

## FWF Principal Investigator Projects

Maximum flexibility and the freedom to implement pioneering projects in all disciplines of basic research – the FWF’s Principal Investigator Project funding offers researchers a thematically open funding program that covers a wide range of individual requirements. It provides principal investigators and their research groups with the resources they need to investigate key research questions over a period of several years.

### Target group

This funding program is aimed at researchers in all career stages and is open for all disciplines.

### Funding goals

The Principal Investigator Projects program gives researchers the opportunity to carry out thematically clearly defined research projects limited to a specific duration and to devote themselves to investigating individual research questions.

### Funding period and funding amount

- Maximum 48 months
- Depending on the proposed research, project-specific funds (personnel and non-personnel costs) can be applied for. The number of reviews required depends on the amount of funding requested.

### Prerequisites

- The applicant has the academic qualifications needed to lead the proposed research project
- Project to be carried out at an Austrian research institution with the necessary infrastructure
- For further details, please see the application guidelines.

### Approval

- Decided by the Scientific Board based on an international review process
- Five approval meetings per year
- Rolling submissions using the online application portal [elane](#)

**Detailed information:** [FWF Principal Investigator Projects](#)

An overview of the complete funding portfolio of the FWF with detailed information on all programs can be found [here](#).