

FWF

Der Wissenschaftsfonds.

Brussels, Nov. 21th 2018

Austrian Science Fund

Interdisciplinarity

Uwe von Ahsen



WIR. FÖRDERN. ZUKUNFT.

Outline

- Background & rationale
- 1st call on Interdisciplinarity – key points
- Preliminary outcome
- Learnings

Background & rationale

- Observation at FWF: Trend towards team-oriented research & increasing interdisciplinarity (ID \geq 15 %* according to discipline classification)
- Approval rate of interdisciplinary project applications (slightly) lower

Programme	Target
Stand-alone projects	Single PI, open disciplinarity
Research groups	3-5 res., multi-/interdisciplinarity
Special research programmes	5-15 res., multi-/interdisciplinarity
Young independent researcher groups (YIRG)	3-5 res., interdisciplinarity
<i>Planned: Pioneer change labs</i>	<i>Team #?, transdisciplinarity</i>

(not shown: career development, international programmes,...)

YIRG: a Postdoc-Programme for Innovative, Interdisciplinary Teams*

Programme objectives

- Promotion of young postdocs (0–4 years after doctorate).
- Medium-term research cooperation (4 years) on a complex, current topic in mixed teams of at least 3 to max. 5 researchers#.
- Research cooperation should be interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary on innovative subjects.
- The research question is to be deepened or newly consolidated at least two research institutions or two organisational units of a research institution.

#: considering gender equality

*jointly created with the Austrian Academy of Sciences

Required description of cooperation

Description of interdisciplinarity, thematic coherence and the expected value of innovation through cooperation in YIRG:

- a. by using a coherent and consistent terminology
- b. by identifying the relevant characteristics of the problem
- c. by presenting the aspects to be examined
- d. by integrating the various disciplinary theories into a common theoretical approach
- e. through the description of how the synthesis is formed – common language, theoretical basis, individual contributions

In addition to: description of state-of-the-art in research, shared goals, questions and concepts, novelty, gender, ethics aspects.

Decision-making process

- First stage: Expression of interest
 - Formal check on eligibility of applicants
 - Getting an idea about the range of research topic
- Second stage: Full proposal
 - Three written reviews on proposal by external reviewers, trying to get the closest fit to the research topic
 - FWF board members provide short summary on 3 reviews
 - Proposed classification into a typical A, B, C scheme
 - Jury decision based on proposal & reviews
 - Formal confirmation by FWF board

Finding the Jury

- One Chair with ample experience in interdisciplinary research
- List of 12 renowned scientists/scholars
- 4 researchers representing each FWF department:
 - Biology and Medicine
 - Natural and Technical Sciences
 - Social Sciences and Humanities
- Specific search for Jury Members according to various scientific/scholarly disciplines in alignment with the topics of the applications received

Response from the community

- Enormous interest of national and international early stage researchers/scholars
- Two events to prepare the community for the call (>100 participants each time)
- High willingness and flexibility observed with early stage scientists: open-minded, creative, flexible, thinking and acting across borders...
- FWF was commended for this programme; the community was enthusiastic about this new opportunity to work in teams, as well as to prepare a research programme with a solely interdisciplinary focus

Distribution of applications

- 58 full proposals (max. 2 Mill € per group plus 25% overhead costs)
 - 33% Social & Cultural Sciences & Humanities
 - 47% Biology & Medicine
 - 20% Natural & Technical Sciences

Distribution of applications

- 50 % of the applications interlink 3 researchers
- 50% of the applications interlink 4 or 5 researchers
- Participation of women 47,7%
- In 55% of all cases, coordinator has finished his/her doctorate within the last 2 years

Preliminary results

- Level of interdisciplinarity (based on FoS categories) varied among projects
- Team composition of women and men researchers (30-50% participation of the underrepresented gender)
- Within the excellent evaluated proposals researchers were commended for their highly innovative, truly interdisciplinary research programmes
- Within poorly evaluated proposals we have found many comments on the quality of the projects in terms of overambitious research design, methodology not elaborated enough; integration of the different research disciplines not sufficiently described

Learnings

- Programme design: Interdisciplinarity requires experience – integrate senior researchers as mentors or partners
- Recommendations from the jury & reviewers
- Provide learnings to the community on definition and scope of *Interdisciplinarity* – and to prepare community for next call
- Offer networking possibilities to facilitate idea complementation and match making across disciplines – more process orientation
- Increase awareness also towards transdisciplinary research

FWF

Der Wissenschaftsfonds.

NEUES ENTDECKEN

TALENTE FÖRDERN

IDEEN UMSETZEN

WIR. FÖRDERN. ZUKUNFT.