

Call for proposals

for projects in

Research Cooperation and Networking between Austria, Kosovo and the Western Balkan Region

(In the framework of the project
"HERAS+ – Higher Education Research and Applied Science Plus
(Kosovo)")

Invitation for submission of proposals

The Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI) in Vienna and the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) of Kosovo launch together a call for **scientific networking and project cooperation between researchers from public universities and universities of applied sciences in Austria, in Kosovo and the Western Balkan region¹ with special attention to young and early stage researchers**. The call is part of the project "HERAS+" which is funded by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and co-financed by the Ministry of Education and Science (MES).

Deadline for submission: 25 February 2021

The activities in the funded projects shall empower researchers in Kosovo to cooperate within international academic networks and to enable researchers from Austria, Kosovo and the Western Balkan region to work together on mutually beneficial science driven projects.

The total funding available for this call for proposals is **135.000 Euro**. Funding is foreseen for a maximum duration of **18 months** and the max. funding per project is €15.000. The allowable funding per project must be justified by the content, work load, duration and number of teams involved. For projects with higher financial costs than €15.000, co-financing from other internal or external sources is expected.

Possible project activities are: comparative studies, small empirical investigations, mapping and know-how exchange on European standards and practices in the chosen research areas etc.

¹ Western Balkan region: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia

The coordinator of the consortium, who is the principal investigator and thus contractor, has to be a public university² or a university of Applied Sciences³⁴ from Austria.

The compulsory formal consortium composition has to include at least one partner from Austria and at least one partner from Kosovo. Optionally, researcher(s) from the following countries **may** be included: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro or Serbia. Researchers from these countries are not expected to be formal partners of the consortium and do not have to sign the “Power of Attorney”. Researchers from other European countries can also participate in the projects but without any funding provided under this call (as so-called ‘silent partners’).

All ethnic groups in Kosovo are explicitly invited to participate in this call. Participation of the University of North Mitrovica as part of the higher education system of Kosovo is welcomed.

Proposals should contribute to significant scientific regional cooperation with (a) research institution(s) in Kosovo. The extent and quality of inclusion of regional collaboration are important criteria for the evaluation.

Deadline for the submission of proposals is **25 February 2021**. All project activities must be completed within the project’s duration (max. 18 months). **Starting date of the projects is 1 June 2021**.

For submitting a proposal, the provided template has to be used. It can be downloaded here: <https://www.heraskosovo.org/research-grants-2/>

Thematic areas

Projects funded under this call should address the priority fields stipulated by the National Research Programme of Kosovo:

- Environment, Energy and Natural Resources,
- Agricultural Production and Food Safety,
- Medical Research,
- Development of a Knowledge Based Society,
- Linguistic, Historic and Cultural Studies,
- or Cross-horizontal Research in Information and Communication Technologies.

² List of public universities in Austria: <https://uniko.ac.at/uniko/mitglieder/universitaeten/index.php?lang=EN>

³ List of Universities of Applied Sciences in Austria (only in German available) <http://www.fhk.ac.at/index.php?id=151&L=0>

⁴ See “Eligibility for participation”. Private universities and non-university research institutions are not eligible.

In addition, the applications should contribute to the implementation of other strategic documents related to Kosovo's development documents/plans with focus on higher education such as Kosovo Education Strategic Plan (KESP)⁵, the National Development Plan (NDS)⁶ and the Kosovo Economic Reform Plan (ERP)⁷.

Please justify in your application how your proposal contributes to the reform and modernisation efforts of Kosovo preferably by referencing arguments from the mentioned documents (KESP, NDS, ERP) or any other effective and legal document issued by a state authority.

Cross-cutting theme

“Gender equality”, “peace building and conflict prevention” and “environmental protection” should be appropriately considered in all projects funded under this call or be the specific focus of the project.

Objectives of the Call

The objectives of this call for proposals “Research Cooperation and Networking between Austria, Kosovo and the Western Balkan Region” are:

- Promoting international scientific cooperation and networking between Austrian researchers, researchers from Kosovo and researchers from the Western Balkan region in the thematic areas of the call;
- Empowerment of young and early stage Kosovan researchers engaged at public universities in Kosovo to work within international academic networks;
- Strengthening the participation of researchers from the public universities in Kosovo in regional collaborative research networking projects;
- Adopting, generating, exploiting and disseminating scientific methods and/or research results between Austria, Kosovo and the Western Balkan region in the chosen thematic area.

⁵ Kosovo Education Strategic Plan (KESP) (2017-2021), published by the government in July 2016 (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology): https://www.kryeministriks.net/repository/docs/KOSOVO_EDUCATION_STRATEGIC_PLAN.pdf

⁶ National Development Strategy 2016-2021 (NDS) from 2016, published by the Office of the Prime Minister: <http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/SRB184213.pdf>

⁷ Kosovo Economic Reform Programme (ERP) (2020-2022), published by the government: <https://mf.rks-gov.net/page.aspx?id=2,28>

Activities of the Projects

The project can implement activities such as:

- Comparative studies and know-how exchange on European standards and practices in a specified thematic area;
- Mapping exercises: studies providing an overview on topics and state-of-art of research in a specific field in Kosovo, in the Western Balkan region as well as in Europe;
- Joint efforts to adopt and use methods and/or the conduct of scientific studies of limited scope relevant for the target countries (case studies, comparative analysis, small empirical investigations, etc.);
- Organisation of joint workshops, seminars and conferences;
- Scientific training measures;
- Joint publications.

It is not necessary to implement all of these potential activities within one project.

Neither the development of curricula and teaching courses nor the digitalisation of existing content can be funded under this call for proposals.

Submission of Proposals

Application form

As soon as the call is open, the application form for the proposals can be downloaded from: <https://www.heraskosovo.org/research-grants-2/>

The form “**Power of Attorney**”⁸ has to be duly signed by **all** project partners from Kosovo and additional partners from Austria (other than the coordinator), certifying that all partners agree with the contents of the proposal as well as that the information is true and complete and the team available to execute the tasks assigned. This “Power of Attorney” authorises the Austrian coordinator to negotiate and conclude the contract on behalf of the consortium. It has to be signed by the legally responsible person of each institution (eg. rector, dean, head of the institute if legally responsible) and by the team leaders.

The duly signed and scanned “Powers of Attorney” has to be submitted by e-mail together with the proposal.

⁸ An example-letter for such a “Power of Attorney” is provided with the application form.

Submission via e-mail to:

Zentrum für Soziale Innovation GmbH
Ms. Andrea Mayr
“HERAS+-Call 2020/21”

mayr@zsi.at

Deadline for the submission:

an electronic version has to be sent by e-mail to mayr@zsi.at until 25 February 2021, 18.00 o'clock.

Timetable

Call for proposals opens Deadline for submission	24 November 2020 25 February 2021
An electronic version has to be sent to mayr@zsi.at until 18:00 o'clock.	25 February 2021, 18:00 o'clock
The coordinator will receive an acknowledgement of receipt electronically (to the e-mail-address indicated in the proposal) within 1 day after the deadline for applications.	
Evaluation of proposals Selection board meeting Awarding of project contracts	March/April 2021 May 2021 May 2021
Starting date of project Interim Report Final Report and latest end of project	1 June 2021 28 February 2022 30 November 2022

Eligibility for participation

Eligible for application *as contractor and coordinator* are only Austrian public universities and Austrian Universities of Applied Sciences,

Not eligible are private universities, non-university research organisations, individual researchers without institutional affiliation, companies and consultants.

A preliminary eligibility check will be performed by the call management if requested in written form no later than 2 weeks before the deadline (see contact details, mayr@zsi.at).

Eligible *as project partners* are public universities from Kosovo as well as additional public universities and universities of applied sciences from Austria (other than the coordinator). The involvement from researchers from the Western Balkan Region (also without formal partnership agreement) is highly encouraged and an evaluation criterion.

The following minimum consortium composition has to be respected (overall minimum two institutions):

Minimum one partner, Eligible as contractor/coordinator	Austria
Minimum one partner	Kosovo
Optionally, researchers may be included from the Western Balkan countries without formal contract relations.	Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro or Serbia

Additional formal consortium partners from Austria and Kosovo are possible.

Criteria for evaluating proposals

The criteria to be applied in evaluating projects are as follows:

- The nature of the proposed activity (clear objectives, scientific relevance and quality, feasibility, potential benefit, impact, sustainability, appropriate time schedule and workflow) (40%);
- Cost and value for money, transparent budget, budget justifications (20%);
- Qualification and expertise of the coordinator and the project partners (10%);
- Extent and quality of regional collaboration (10%);
- The concept and way of inclusion, capacity building and empowerment of young Kosovan researcher(s) (10%);
- The consideration of cross cutting themes (“gender equality”, “peace building and conflict prevention” and “environmental protection”) (5%).
- Relevance to the reform and modernisation efforts of Kosovo: The contribution to the implementation of other strategic documents related to Kosovo’s development documents/plans with focus on higher education such as Kosovo Education Strategic Plan (KESP), the National Development Plan (NDS) and the Kosovo Economic Reform Plan (ERP) (5%)

Proposals should contribute to scientific cooperation between researchers from Austria, Kosovo the so-called “Western Balkan countries” (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia). Proposers are also encouraged to support interdisciplinary activities and inter-institutional collaboration. To increase the representation of female researchers, proposals with higher female participation will be selected preferentially in cases of equally ranked proposals.

Process of review

1. **Eligibility check:** The proposal will be checked for completeness and appropriateness by the call management. Proposals which do not fulfil the eligibility criteria will be excluded.

The criteria for eligibility are:

- The proposal has to be submitted within the stated deadline **electronically** by e-mail to: mayr@zsi.at. Failure of delivery is the sole responsibility of the applicant.
 - The proposal must be written in English.
 - The application form must be complete.
 - The proposals must be within the scope of the call.
 - The consortium has to include at least 2 formal partners respecting the structure defined in “Eligibility for participation”. (coordinator from Austria and one partner from Kosovo). Additional researcher(s) from the so called Western Balkan countries may be included in the activities of the projects (which is not a formal eligibility criterion).
 - Eligibility of all participating organisations (only public universities and Universities of Applied Sciences).
 - At least 40% of the work from the Kosovan partner has to be done by (a) young researcher(s) or (a) early stage researcher(s).⁹
 - The proposal must bear the original signature of the coordinators’ legally responsible person and the project manager and include “Power of Attorney” letters of all project consortium partners duly signed.
 - The project duration must be within the given project deadlines.
2. Two **independent experts** will evaluate each proposal against the “Criteria for evaluating proposals” stated above in this call.
 3. The final decision about funding will be taken by the **selection board**. Members of the selection board will be one representative of the Scientific Council of MES Kosovo, one representative of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research and one representative of ADA. The decision will be made under exclusion of the course of law.

Further administrative processes

For proposals selected for funding, a contract which specifies the mutual rights and obligations will be set up. This contract is to be signed by the persons authorised to sign on behalf of the successful proposer and by ZSI representing the donors.

The contractor will be responsible for carrying out the project in a timely and accountable manner. The contractor is also responsible for administering the funding. Financial Reporting Guidelines and templates for the technical and financial reporting will be submitted with the contract.

Subject to the funding released by the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC), an initial rate of 40% of the costs will be paid after signing the contract, 40% after the submission of the interim report and the last 20% after the approval of the final report.

⁹ Young researcher: less than 35 years old; Early stage researcher: max. 10 years after graduation from first degree.

Interim report: consisting of a short technical report and a financial report (templates will be submitted with the contract)

Technical report: a short status report of 3 to 5 pages summarising the project progress, the problems occurred so far and implemented or planned solution alternative(s) to overcome the identified problems and an outlook on the next steps.

Financial report: a balance list (stating income and expenditure), with a degree of differentiation which indicates payments for travel and accommodation, meals, personnel costs, etc.. **With the financial report, also the original bills and the related balancing endorsements (proof of payments) have to be submitted.**

Final report: consisting of a technical report and a financial report.
These reports have to be submitted within the project duration at the end of the project.

Technical report: The technical report, as basis for the assessment of the project progress, shall contain a publishable executive summary, an overview of the activities indicating results, problems and a self-assessment of the results. One section has to be dedicated to the prior self-defined indicators. The technical report should be around 5 to maximum 10 pages. A list of participants involved in the main activities (including names, organisational affiliation and e-mail) has to be provided in an annex. Publications and other project results have to be annexed to the final report too.

Financial report: a balance list (stating income and expenditure), with a degree of differentiation which indicates payments for travel and accommodation, meals, personnel costs, etc.. **With the financial report, also the original bills and the related balancing endorsements (proof of payments) have to be submitted. All invoices will be checked by an external certified auditor.**

Eligibility of costs

As a basic principle, project participants are requested to use existing resources, such as employed staff, office space and equipment to the maximum possible extent. Costs which are already covered by other financing sources will not be reimbursed (exclusion of double financing). The funding must be justified in terms of the resources needed to achieve the objectives of the proposed project. A balanced budget between the partners is encouraged. Double funding of the same project activities is not permitted. Related activities funded by other donors have to be stated.

Allowable costs are defined as follows:

Personnel Costs

Personnel costs are only eligible for Austrian partners (lump sum of € 500 for senior researchers¹⁰ and lump sum of € 300 for young and early stage researchers per working day) and Kosovan partners (lump sum of € 115 for senior researchers⁸ and lump sum of € 70 for junior researchers). For researchers from Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia personnel costs are not eligible.

The persons have to be named, the extent of the time spent on the project has to be quantified (amount of person-months, -days or -hours).

Travel and Subsistence

The most economical means of transport consistent with effective pursuit of the project should be used. Upgrades to business class are to be done at one's own expense. For transportation between the airport and hotel, the most economical means available should be used which is usually public transport. In certain cases, travel by private automobile is eligible up to the costs of a 2nd class train ticket.

The cost of visas and insurance required for visas will be covered. Expenses incurred from side trips or other items unnecessary to the project and telephone calls during travel will not be covered.

Travel and subsistence costs must be justified for each journey and for each individual person.

Actual travel costs have to be reported.

Maximum daily allowance for accommodation per country

Austria, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia	€70,00
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Maximum daily allowance for subsistence per country

Austria	€26,40
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Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia	€26,80
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Equipment: Not eligible

Subcontracting: Not eligible

Overheads: 10% overheads of the eligible costs are admitted.

¹⁰ Senior researcher: Minimum 10 years of experience in scientific research.

Consumables: Items (eligible are costs for scientific consumables such as pipettes, chemicals, test tubes, ...) shall be listed with approximate prices and justification (especially if a team is requesting costs for consumables of more than € 200).

Other costs: Costs for publications, etc., which are required for the implementation of the project and cannot be classified under the items need to be indicated and justified.

The funding will be provided in Euro (€). Calculations of currency exchange shall be based on the international exchange rate in effect on the date of the transaction or on justified timely exchange receipt or similar evidence issued by an authorised institution (e.g. bank).

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