

14th Call for proposals for interdisciplinary Seed Fund Projects – including projects within the field of accessibility

Background

The **Exploratory Research Space @ RWTH Aachen (ERS)** is the central instrument of RWTH to foster interdisciplinary research and to develop emerging fields with the potential to shape the University's research profile. ERS comprises activities which give a leeway for creativity to both senior and junior researchers and which foster interdisciplinary exchange and discussion. One activity is the funding of **Seed Fund Projects**. The typical duration of a Seed Fund Project is 6 to 12 months.

1. Type and aim of projects:

The proposed projects should identify and explore new **interdisciplinary** research fields or develop new methods and methodologies between interdisciplinary research topics. The topics should be new, creative and can be of high risk. They must not already be addressed by national or international public funding programs.

This year, one focal point is research within the field of accessibility at RWTH Aachen University¹. These particular Seed Funds aim to empower researchers to develop new approaches and solutions to overcome existing limitations regarding access to knowledge, healthcare, education, career paths, social life, etc., and thus enhance Accessibility for particular groups. Possible target groups include the elderly, persons with physical and psychological disabilities or with a migrant background. The call addresses, but is not limited to, ICT-projects targeting fundamental problems concerning inclusion and providing access to our society. Therefore, proposals should not only address those topics but also include the concerned target groups in the research process.

2. Selection and evaluation criteria:

The projects will be selected and evaluated by an evaluation group. The evaluation process may involve external experts.

The selection criteria for submitted proposals will be

- Originality (new, creative, exploratory),
- Interdisciplinarity (participation of researchers from different faculties and disciplines with strongly differing research topics),
- Subsidiarity (funding through other sources is not yet possible),
- Team structure (senior and/or high-potential young researchers),

¹ The idea of integrating target groups into the research process supports article 21 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which concerns the right to freely obtain, receive and disseminate information. The further development of information and communication technologies makes an important contribution to ensuring that knowledge can be transferred and disseminated in an accessible manner. This requires not only innovation and creativity but also empathy in order to integrate and implement the interests of the target group(s) into the project.

- Potential impact on the research strategy and structure of RWTH Aachen,
- Adequateness of research approach,
- Adequateness of research data management plan.

Major evaluation criteria after project completion will be the quality of obtained research results and the future perspectives of the research topic as described in a final report which has to be provided 18 months after project closure:

- A promising proposed third-party funded follow-up project (DFG, BMBF, EU, ...),
- Publications in peer reviewed journals,
- Granted patents or promising patent applications.

3. Funding

The budget for a Seed Fund Project is provided by the Excellence Strategy of the German Federal and State Governments and makes allowances to the allocation model aiming for 30 % share of females. The total budget for all new Seed Fund projects is at most 650.000 €. 20 % of the budget is earmarked to fund research projects in the field of Accessibility at RWTH Aachen University. 400.000 € of the funding must be spent in 2020, the rest afterwards. This will require two separate accounts. Funds cannot be transferred from one account to the other.

Eligible costs are: Staff expenses including student assistants, travel and subsistence costs, support for workshops and conferences, consumables and equipment.

Please note: due to the type of funding, funded research staff needs to have a mandatory teaching assignment (Lehrverpflichtung) (4 hours per week for full time non-permanent staff)

4. General conditions

Applicants: typically 2-3 researchers from different faculties and disciplines; we strongly encourage the participation of young scientists (junior professor, group leader, research fellow, etc.) who are scientifically independent and are leading a research group.

The researchers should not be part of the same institutes.

Joint proposals with partners from Forschungszentrum Juelich (FZJ) are welcome. The research topics and the expertise of the FZJ partners must be different from those of the RWTH partners and they have to complement each other. The expenses of the partners from FZJ will not be covered by ERS funding.

Each research team (professor with his/her group) can participate in a maximum of 3 Seed Fund project proposals in one call.

Progress evaluation: final report

5. Proposal structure and content

Length of proposal: 10 pages **max.**, font size: Arial 11, line spacing: 1.5

- Project partners and applicants
- Summary

- Current State-of-the-Art
- Relevant preliminary work of the applicants
- Goals and approach (methodology)
- Work programme
- Financial plan
- Expected long term impact (targeted third party funding, implementation of new scientific infrastructure, new significantly visible, interdisciplinary competences, action plan to achieve these strategic goals)
- Research data management plan
- References

Language: English or German

Please note: Proposals that do not comply with the formal criteria will be excluded from the reviewing process.

6. Deadline for submission: 21st January 2020

7. Project start: May 2020

8. Project duration: 6 to 12 months

9. Please apply at: <http://portal.ers.rwth-aachen.de>

Call: OPEN Seed Fund 2020

For additional information on the selection process, please refer to our website:

<http://www.rwth-aachen.de/ers>

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