

# Call for early career researcher working groups (ECR)

Financing after September 2024 is subject to approval of iDiv funding beyond DFG funding.

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## 1 General information and rules

This call is for synthesis working groups of eight to ten people, led and driven by early career researchers, starting in 2023. The call aims to allow early-stage scientists to conduct synthesis projects in a stimulating and supportive international environment.

**With this call, we want to specifically encourage applications of researchers from regions that are often under-represented in science. The project must have at least one PI and also at least one additional participant from such an usually under-represented region (see list [here](#)).**

Although not exclusively, we particularly encourage projects that use knowledge from regions that are typically under-represented in biodiversity research (e.g., data/information extracted from non-English publications) and/or are of great importance for the future development of an under-represented region (e.g. applicants country or region of origin etc.) while also having a strong connection to overarching research questions beyond those regions.

Two or three in-person meetings will take place in Leipzig, depending on the prevailing Corona situation. If hybrid or full in-person meetings cannot take place, sDiv working groups should try to meet virtually with full support by sDiv.

Each sDiv working group should have at least one [iDiv member](#) (full & associated members are eligible) as a participant. **Please note: iDiv member is a pre-defined term and is not referring to every iDiv researcher (e.g. iDiv employee).** [iDiv members](#) are either iDiv research group leaders or researchers from collaborating institutes who have to apply for being iDiv members. It is a specific status.

A pre-proposal without a letter of support from an [iDiv member](#) will not be further evaluated.

Please read thoroughly about the [general mission and ideas behind iDiv and the sDiv synthesis centre](#) as they are important and helpful in preparing a successful sDiv proposal.

## 2 Early Career Researcher working groups

### 2.1 Working group composition

The working groups should be small collaborative teams of early career researchers (ECR). ECRs are defined as PhD students or postdocs who completed their PhD no more than 6 years ago, counted with this call deadline. This limit may be extended by maternity/paternity leave. Further, one year per child can be added to the six years period. Any other relevant non-full research periods to be considered as an extension should be well explained.

The group's PIs must be ECRs as well. In addition, if the PIs have not completed their PhD yet, at least one of them must have submitted the PhD thesis. The project must have at least one PI from an usually under-represented region and also at least one additional participant from such a region.

The size of the working group is limited to eight scientists, including max. two senior researchers. The status of each participant has to be clarified in the proposal. The senior researchers are meant to contribute with their expertise but should not lead or dominate the team. Also, they must not be the supervisors of any early career researchers involved. If the project is funded, we offer the opportunity to include two additional iDiv researchers if suitable and reasonable.

ECR projects should aim to have at least 40% female participation. In order to foster new collaborations and networks, at least 50% of the working group participants should not have collaborated before. To balance the carbon footprint and necessary geographic representation, the PIs are asked to choose the participants meaningfully. For this call targeting research-wise underrepresented regions, a maximum of five of the eight participants can be from outside of geographical Europe (if well justified).

### 2.2 Collaboration in iDiv

At least one of the participants has to be an [iDiv member](#), and this person may thus have to be one of the senior researchers. **Please note: iDiv member is a pre-defined term and is not referring to every iDiv researcher (e.g. iDiv employee) in your project team.** Generally we want the iDiv researchers to be involved in the same way as anyone else in the project. It should not lead to picking names because you have to, but it should really lead to a meaningful and for the project helpful integration and collaboration. Choose the iDiv researcher wisely according to their expertise. Please also see iDiv's PhD graduate school [yDiv](#) for potential PhD students to be included in your project.

Contact sDiv head [Marten Winter](#) in finding suitable [iDiv members](#) and/or yDiv PhD students.

### 3 Application process

#### 3. Pre-proposal

You are only eligible to submit a full sDiv proposal if you were invited to do so after a successfully reviewed pre-proposal. The mandatory pre-proposal should briefly describe the project and the aims. Pre-proposals have to be submitted via an online form in the [iDiv application portal](#) before **22 March 2022 (11:59 PM CET)**. Decisions whether you can submit a full proposal will be made within three weeks following the pre-proposal deadline.

The pre-proposal online form includes:

1. Information and status of the PIs and participants, including the supporting iDiv member (early career or senior researcher).
2. A brief description of the planned project (no more than 750 words excluding references, usage of references is optional, no charts, no graphics, no calculations, no formatting but continuous text) including the novelty, the synthesis aspect and scientific aims, approaches (methods, used data etc.) and relevance for biodiversity.
3. A brief description how your project tackles the under-represented region gap in this call (e.g. briefly describe how potential project participants and PIs are related to it and how the topic might address certain relevant topics and regions).
4. A list of data to be used - clarify the source and availability status (e.g. available, to be mobilized, etc.) of the data you plan to use, if applicable.
5. A letter of support by the iDiv member(s) using the template provided on the [sDiv website](#) - a pre-proposal without a letter of support from an iDiv member will not be further evaluated.
6. A list of min. five potential reviewers for the full proposal in case of a successful pre-proposal.

#### 3.2 Full proposal

Following the invitation to submit a full proposal, it is necessary to complete the **proposal template** provided on the [sDiv website](#) - available after the pre-proposal deadline. Submit your full proposal including all attachments in **one PDF file** via the online form in the [iDiv application portal](#) by **22 June 2022 (11:59 PM CET)**. Check the online form well before the submission deadline - it contains a number of questions to be filled out in order to ease processing of the application data.

## 4 Research data management

With the invitation to submit a full proposal and submission of the resulting application, it is required that the data owners agree to make the data and code resulting from sDiv funding publicly available. This should be achieved within three years of the final working group meeting, and under the least restrictive license possible.

Therefore, the working group PIs have to read and accept the iDiv Data Sharing and Data Portal Usage policies. These are currently undergoing revision and will be provided when projects are invited for full proposals. General iDiv's data policies follow widely accepted Open Science principles.

Funded projects will receive intensive support in any necessary code and data management demands by iDiv's Integrative Biodiversity Data and Code Support Unit.

## 5 Budget

The budget for one working group meeting is generally limited to 7.500,00 €. Working groups should meet two or three times over a period of two to three years (max. sum ~22.500,00 €). The third meeting is subject to a project evaluation by the sDiv board after the second meeting. The financial support shown in the approved budget includes care of all local arrangements (local transportation, per diem expenses etc.) and reimbursement for travel and lodging. Administration of the budget is handled by the sDiv staff. For virtual meetings, please check our [virtual meeting guideline](#) to see which specific services sDiv offers.

Budget calculation has to be done via the [budget tool](#) provided on the sDiv website. It is important to add a screenshot of the budget tool to the full proposal.

**Any financial deviations from the proposed budget in the full proposal or change of participants of funded proposals must be discussed with the Head of sDiv. Please note that we cannot shift the money over the years!**

## 6 Evaluation procedure

### 6.1 Selection criteria

Generally, selection criteria are based on scientific excellence, the relevance and novelty of the research questions, a strategic fit to iDiv research (please read carefully the [sDiv framework](#)), work plan (timeline, deliverables etc.), expertise and fit of the working group participants and the PIs as well as the region of the PIs (please see rules described in this document). The project's objectives have to be highly relevant to iDiv's central missions.

## 6.2 Proposal evaluation

Pre-proposals will be evaluated within three weeks after the submission deadline by the sDiv executive board.

Full proposals are usually evaluated within fifteen weeks after the submission deadline by the sDiv evaluation board and external expert reviewers.

## 7 Reporting

The PIs of funded working groups are obliged to provide a summary of every meeting immediately afterwards. Furthermore, it is expected that a final report will be delivered six months after the last meeting. All reports will be published on the individual [sDiv project webpages](#).

The report should include specific project deliverables: i.e. manuscripts of multi-author scientific publications, proposals for other funding sources, code, databases etc. It should also include a description of further collaboration plans. **sDiv support has to be acknowledged in any kind of sDiv project publication/outcome ([see guidelines](#)).** **Copies of published products should be sent to sDiv.**

As an important part of the improvement of sDiv and the development of synthesis centers, working groups are evaluated before, during and after the meetings. Every working group participant is asked to answer the evaluation survey(s) after the meeting(s).

Failure to complete a working group successfully for unjustified reasons and non-compliance with iDiv's data policy can result in banning PIs from submitting future proposals to project calls.