

PhD and Postdoc Project Call 2026

Call for proposals

Deadlines and Important Dates

- Letter of intent deadline (obligatory): 28 May 2026 (11:59 p.m. CEST)
- Proposal deadline: 10 August 2026 (11:59 p.m. CEST)
- Expected decision date : October 2026
- Project start: between January and June 2027

A short glossary can be found at the end of the call.

1 General Information

In this iDiv Funding call (formerly Flexpool), applicants can apply either for a postdoc or a PhD project. After a positive funding approval, a project is required to hire a highly suitable researcher via an open and international call for candidates, initiated by iDiv.

The **postdoc projects** include salary for one postdoc position (100%, E13) for up to three years.

The **PhD projects** include salary for one PhD position (65%, E13 TVL) for three years (a one-year extension is being considered for completing the dissertation, pending project evaluation and funding availability).

The projects also receive up to €2,500 per year for consumables. Additional funding can be applied for to cover very well-justified expenses (e.g., field/lab work). Projects are expected to start between January and June 2027.

The main purpose of this call is to instigate **innovative research projects** that foster integration across the various areas of expertise within the iDiv community and **increase the visibility of iDiv's integrative character** across the iDiv consortium. Successful projects should specifically focus on topics integrating within and across iDiv's five research topics: Functions, Complexity, People and Biodiversity, Integrative Approaches, and Transdisciplinary Research.

If you have any questions, please send an email to the Integration unit: integration@idiv.de.

2 Rules

2.1 Eligibility

All iDiv Members employed at a research institution in Central Germany and who have completed their PhD at least six years ago are eligible to submit proposals as the main PI. Members who have received iDiv Flexpool staff funding in Flexpool Postdoc or PhD calls from 2024 as the main PI should refrain from applying, but are encouraged to participate as co-applicants (Co-PIs).

The main PI must be employed for the entire duration of the project. Members are allowed to submit only one project proposal as the main PI in this call.

PIs and Co-PIs should only include researchers who assume responsibilities and allow time for a smooth and successful completion of the project. This is primarily based on their scientific expertise, and their role in mentoring the postdoctoral or doctoral researcher, but could also relate to the provision of infrastructure. Co-PIs need to be involved in all decisions related to the project's content, staff, and budget.

Collaborators can be involved in the project either as iDiv Members or from elsewhere, and are expected to make substantial contributions. However, they are not expected to play a significant role in co-mentoring the postdoc or managing the budget.

2.2 Selection Criteria

Criteria A: Excellence & Strategy Fit (60%)

- Scientific quality of the proposal
- Potential of the research team and PI to successfully lead this specific project, including the mentoring approach to support the postdoc in their career development, or including a state-of-the-art supervision concept to mentor the doctoral researcher
- Support the iDiv Science Strategy: All project topics have to be tightly linked to and relevant for iDiv's research strategy and its five integrative biodiversity research topics: Functions, Complexity, People and Biodiversity, Integrative Approaches, Transdisciplinary Research
- iDiv also welcomes high-risk/high-gain projects that may lead to further research proposals, though this is not a prerequisite

Criteria B: Integration & Supervision (20%)

Strengthen integration among iDiv Members, including visibility at the iDiv partner institutions as well as among iDiv's five integrative biodiversity research topics. *(Please note that more people on the proposal does not necessarily mean better integration.)*

iDiv will evaluate the quality and feasibility of the supervision and mentoring strategy to support mental well-being, career support as well integration in the project teams and in the iDiv consortium (e.g., iDiv Core Centre, general iDiv activities).

Criteria C: Impact (20%)

Given that iDiv's scientific mission extends beyond knowledge generation to addressing societal challenges, applicants are strongly encouraged to strategically consider where and how their project can make an impact, both academically and beyond *(see iDiv Science Strategy section 3 – please note that this document is currently under revision and therefore restricted; access can be requested via integration@idiv.de).*

Applicants' impact strategies (submitted with the full proposal) should include plans for disseminating and communicating your academic products (e.g., peer-reviewed publications, R packages/code, open workflows, databases, etc.) to academic and public audiences (where

relevant). If applicable, meaningful plans for stakeholder engagement, knowledge transfer to policy and/or businesses or educational activities (e.g., offering training courses to the iDiv Graduate School) should also be included.

To develop a strong impact strategy for your project, please seek support from [iDiv's Impact unit](#).

In addition to the selection criteria (A-C), iDiv strongly encourage projects:

- With actionable research, i.e. relevant for policy-, decision-makers or businesses, and/or with plans to translate the scientific results into accessible products for the respective communities;
- Having PIs and Co-PIs engaged in iDiv activities (in past and in future, e.g., participation in boards/committees, internal reviews, teaching, etc.);
- Balancing institutions across the iDiv consortium (based on the main PI);
- Balancing genders among the main PIs.

2.3 Research Data

To support the principles of Open Science, all data and code resulting from iDiv funding must be made publicly available under the least restrictive license possible. This should be achieved within three years of the final project activity. Upon approval, PIs are required to sign and return the **iDiv Data and Code Sharing Policy**, which aligns with global Open Science standards. To facilitate this process, funded projects will receive support for their data and code management needs from iDiv's Data, Code & Statistics team and from the Scientific Computing expert(s) ([Resources Unit](#)).

Applicants applying for a research project with a synthesis focus should provide evidence that sufficient data are available (i.e. the synthesis is possible). The status of data availability must be indicated in the full proposal.

2.4 Budget

The call includes salary and consumable costs for one postdoctoral (100%, E13 TV-L) or one doctoral researcher position (65%, E13 TV-L). Each project can apply for a €2,500 consumable budget per year. If additional funding is required (for example for lab or field work), well-justified specifications should be provided below the budget section in the full-proposal template.

Please note that the consumables budget should include a travel budget for travelling to the iDiv Core Centre in Leipzig to attend, for example, iDiv events and iDiv Postdoc Programme courses, as well as any budget needed for attending international conferences. The amount for consumables per year should be used within that year.

Investments and basic equipment (incl. IT equipment, software) required for the project should be provided by the main PI.

2.5 Researcher Employment

Final project approval requires a positive evaluation of the proposal and selection of an excellent postdoctoral or PhD candidate, who will be recruited through an open international recruitment call initiated by iDiv.

All researchers will be employed by one of the three universities (Halle, Jena, Leipzig) or the UFZ. In case the main PI is not employed by any of those institutes, a Co-PI must be identified who can facilitate the PhD or Postdoc employment through one of them. Please keep in mind that postdocs hired at the universities will have teaching obligations. It is essential to include these aspects in your supervision and mentoring strategy within the full proposal.

Working space and additional infrastructure has to be provided by the PI's institution. iDiv provides working space for short-term visits at the Core Centre in Leipzig, which are encouraged for integration and visibility.

Doctoral and postdoctoral researchers are fully integrated into iDiv with access to general iDiv resources, such as the library, HPC cluster, car park and so on. Given this access, researchers are obliged to adhere to general [iDiv regulations](#). They are expected to contribute to synergistic activities within the iDiv consortium and adhere to the [iDiv data policy](#). They are also eligible to use [iDiv scientific support units](#) and participate in institutional programmes. They are encouraged to participate in iDiv events and are expected to give at least once an institutional-wide seminar presentation, such as at iDiv's annual conference.

Postdocs are automatically enrolled in the [iDiv Postdoc Programme](#) and active participation is expected. iDiv encourages postdocs to teach for the iDiv Graduate School or in iModule courses.

The iDiv doctoral researchers will be members of the [iDiv Graduate School](#) and active participation is expected.

2.6 Monitoring

Doctoral Researchers

Annual progress reports are mandatory for doctoral researchers and serve as reports for the annual PhD Advisory Committee (PAC) meetings. All doctoral researchers must submit their reports to the iDiv Graduate School team. See more information about the PhD Advisory Committee [here](#).

Postdoctoral Researchers

At least two annual meetings between the researcher and the entire project team (all PIs, Co-PIs, and collaborators) are mandatory in order to maintain a minimum of team integration, communication, and to evaluate the progress of the project and the researcher's personal development. These meetings must be documented and a copy of the minutes and must be submitted to [the Integration unit](#).

All researchers are expected to report on their progress by presenting their results at the annual iDiv Conference. After the end of the funding period, the main PI of the project is obliged to report on its progress and outcomes. A report template or link to an online reporting tool will be sent to the PI. Furthermore, PIs of funded projects must contribute proactively to any evaluation reports requested by iDiv funders.

Postdoctoral and doctoral researchers and their PIs should maintain close communication with their Co-PIs. Short-term visits and regular meetings are encouraged.

The researchers and their PIs must use the iDiv affiliation and mention iDiv funding in scientific papers and publications arising from their projects. Details can be found in the guidelines for using the iDiv affiliation (under revision, will be published soon).

3 Application Process

3.1 Letter of Intent

Applicants are only eligible to submit a full proposal if they have been invited to do so following the successful review of their letter of intent. The **mandatory letter of intent** should briefly describe the project idea, focusing on the research gap, the project's novelty, its aims, and how it fits with the iDiv research strategy and integration. The **letter of intent must be submitted via an online form in the iDiv application portal before 28 May 2026 (23:59 CET)**. If selected, applicants will be informed in early **June 2026** and asked to submit a full proposal. The letter of intent form (online) includes:

- Information and status of the main PI;
- List of Co-PIs and collaborators;
- A brief summary of the planned project (no more than 200 words, excluding references; text only), including the aims, the research gap to be addressed and the reasons for addressing it, the novelty of the planned project, and how the project fits within the iDiv Scientific Strategy and contributes to iDiv's mission;
- An explanation of how the project relates to and is linked with iDiv's research topics: functions, complexity, people and biodiversity, integrative approaches, and transdisciplinary research. Please include the reasons for collaborating with specific iDiv members in the project.
- A list of minimum four potential reviewers for the full proposal pending a successful Letter of Intent.

3.2 Full Proposal

Following the invitation to submit a full proposal, it is necessary to complete the full proposal form, which is available on the iDiv website (link will be provided). **Submit your full proposal including all attachments as a single PDF file via the online form in the iDiv application portal by 10 August 2026 (23:59 CET)**. Please check all regulations and the online form well before the submission deadline as it contains a number of questions that must be filled out to ensure the successful processing of the application data. **Final funding**

decisions will be made in October 2026, with feedback sent a few days afterwards to both successful and unsuccessful applicants.

4 Evaluation process

Evaluations will be made by an internal evaluation board (selected by iDiv's Integration unit leadership team) covering necessary expertise and minimising potential conflicts of interest.

The letter of intents will undergo a formal check by the Integration unit.

Full proposals are usually evaluated by the evaluation board and at least two expert reviewers. Reviewers will be recruited from iDiv Members, and Non-Member scientists within the iDiv consortium as well as from among external researchers with the relevant expertise.

The final funding decision is made by the iDiv's Extended Executive Board. All decisions will be communicated to the applicants in writing. Reviews will be anonymised and shared with applicants for both pre-approved and rejected proposals. Information on successful proposals will be published on the iDiv website.

Glossary

Applicant (= PI): Scientifically independent researcher, leader of a research group, PhD holder, the main supervisor of the project, iDiv Member

Co-applicant (= co-PI): Any researcher with relevant scientific expertise and experience in supervising/mentoring students

iDiv consortium: iDiv Members and cooperating institutions, universities and supporters, for more details please see [here](#)

iDiv Members: Scientists who are actively involved in biodiversity research and have successfully applied to a [membership in iDiv e.V.](#)

Research Topics: Functions, Complexity, People and Biodiversity, Integrative Approaches and Transdisciplinary Research

German Centre for Integrative Biodiversity Research Halle-Jena-Leipzig – iDiv e.V.
Puschstrasse 4, 04103 Leipzig, Germany | Phone: +49 341 9733129 | sdiv@idiv.de | www.idiv.de/sdiv/calls
Leipzig Register of Associations: VR 8088 | Tax number: 231/140/34614 | Ust-IdNr.: DE461237234

The Executive Board, consisting of the Scientific Director, Prof Dr Martin Quaas, and the Chief Operating Officer, Dr Anne Wesemann, acts on behalf of iDiv e.V., the representative body of the German Centre for Integrative Biodiversity Research Halle-Jena-Leipzig. Leipzig University, Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Friedrich Schiller University Jena, and the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research GmbH – UFZ are founding institutional members of iDiv e.V.