



Der Wissenschaftsfonds.

**EXPLORING NEW FRONTIERS**

**CULTIVATING TALENTS**

**REALISING NEW IDEAS**

**FUNDING  
THE WAY FORWARD**

# **FWF – Webinar for submission of applications**

FWF research funding – How to present your  
ideas properly and successfully

[www.fwf.ac.at](http://www.fwf.ac.at)

## Technical Check

- Please check your computer audio and video.
- We have set all participants to „mute“. Please unmute your microphone when we call on you personally.
- If you have questions or technical problems, please write them in the "Chat" or call: Christian Reiter, T 01 505 67 40 - 8609
- For the Q&A session: We will create a list of speakers based on the messages in the chat and call you in that order.
- Contact details:
  - Tina Olteanu = Moderator
  - Uwe v. Ahsen = Moderator
  - Christoph Reiter = Technical host
- Important: The presentation will be sent to you by e-mail after the event on Monday, 22 June.

# Objectives

To provide a brief overview of the FWF in general and its "funding machine" in particular

To convey a better understanding of the FWF's procedures and framework for funding decisions

To dispel myths and misconceptions

To help participants gain a sense of confidence and optimism in realising project ideas

## FWF – contact points

Today for you from the FWF office

- **Uwe von Ahsen** (Head of Department – Strategy Department National Programmes)
- **Tina Olteanu** (Programme Manager – Strategy Department National Programmes)

# Agenda

- Introduction
- Selected core features of the FWF and its funding scheme
- Key aspects of the application guidelines. Focus: Stand-alone projects
- Procedures and decision-making
- Recommendations/ hints & tricks
- Feed-back from participants

# Module 1

Basic information about the FWF

# The FWF's corporate policy

## Mandate and mission

### **The FWF's mission is to promote:**

- High-quality research designed to generate new knowledge (basic research)
- Education and training through research
- Science and research communication, research culture and knowledge transfer



# The FWF funding portfolio



## EXPLORING NEW FRONTIERS: Funding of top-quality research

- Stand-Alone Projects
- International Programmes
- Special Research Programmes (SFBs)
- Research Groups
- START Programme
- Wittgenstein Award
- Weiss, ASMET, netidee, Herzfelder
- 1000 ideas



## CULTIVATING TALENTS: Development of human resources

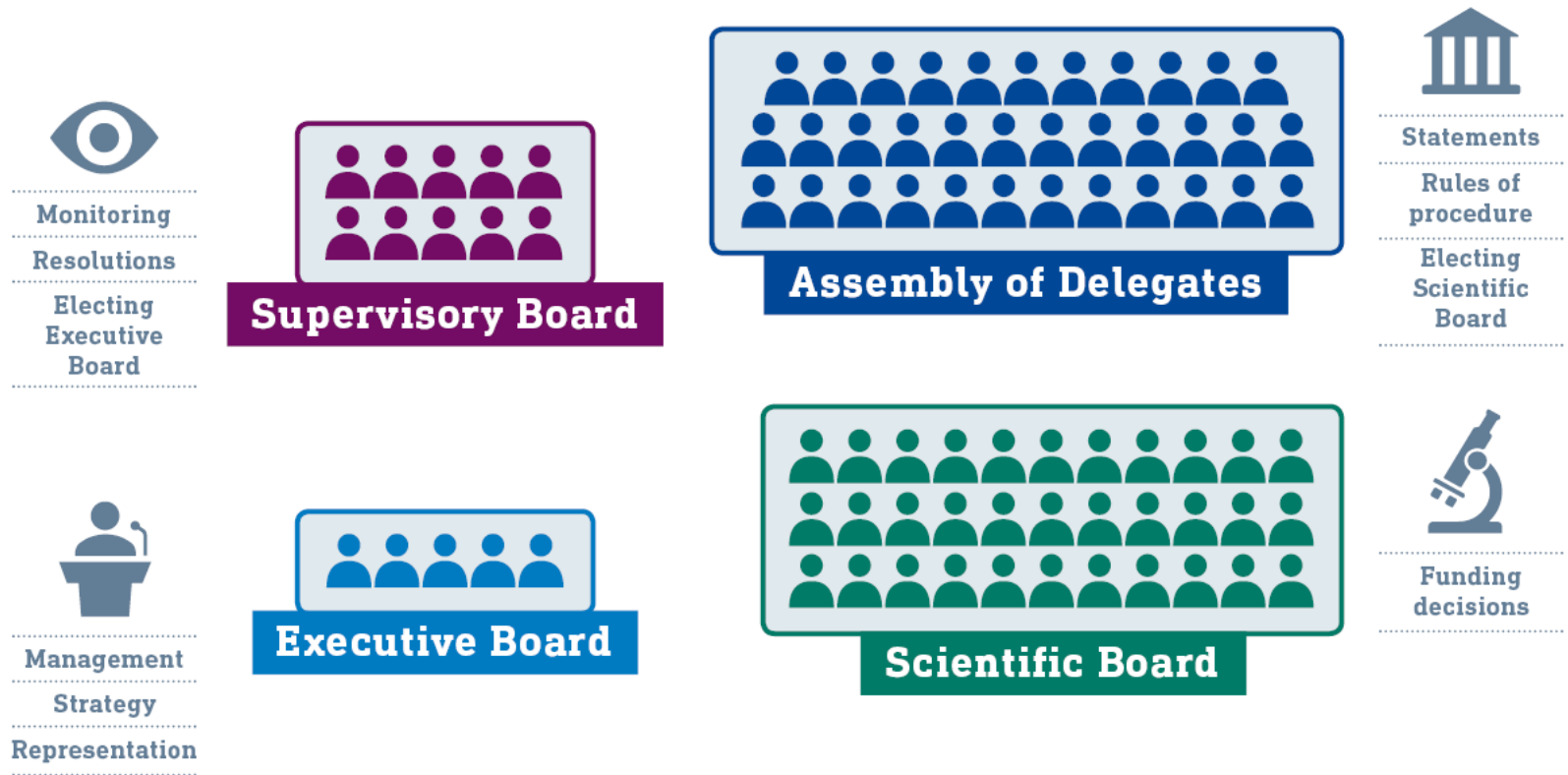
- Doc.funds
- Schrödinger Programme
- Meitner Programme
- Firnberg Programme
- Richter Programme/Richter PEEK
- Young Independent Researcher Groups



## REALISING NEW IDEAS: Interactive effects between science and society

- KLIF
- PEEK
- #ConnectingMinds
- Support for Scientific Publications
- Science Communication Programme
- Top Citizen Science

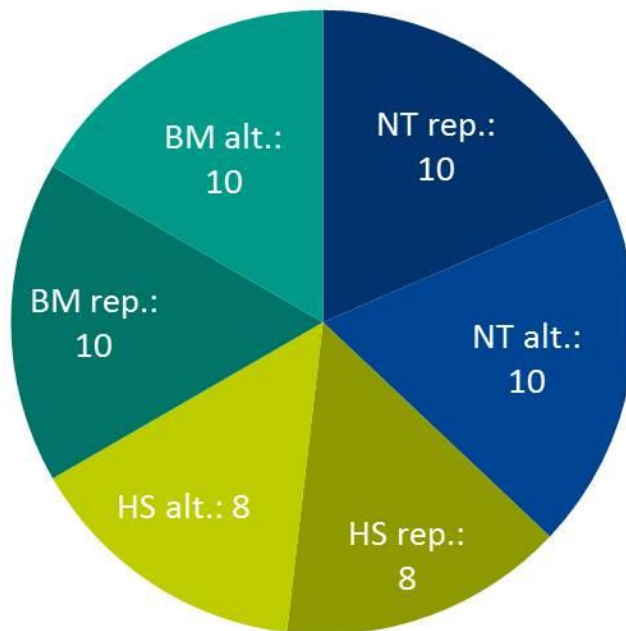
# Decision-making bodies under the FTFG



# The "heart" of the FWF funding machine

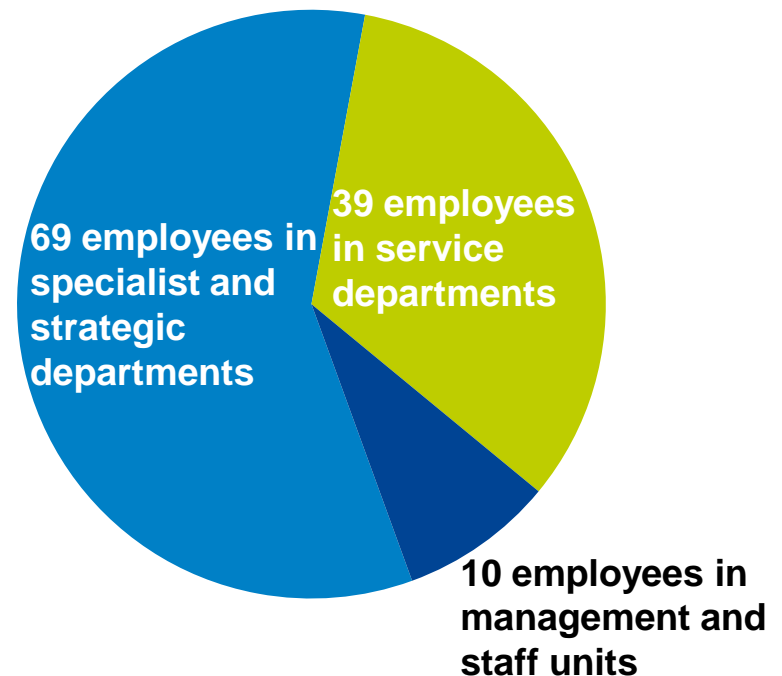
## FWF Board

28 reporters,  
28 alternates  
(all university professors)



## FWF Office

118 Employees – about 2/3 for direct project support



**NT:** Natural sciences and engineering; **HS:** Humanities and social sciences; **BM:** Biology and medicine

## Activities of the FWF Office

- Advising of applicants
- Application processing
- Interaction with FWF bodies
- Organisation of review process
- Communication with reviewers and applicants
- Preparation of recommendations for FWF Board

## Activities of reporters (alternates)

- Nomination of reviewers
- Presentation of review results before FWF Board, decision recommendations
- Participation in decision-making process

## Module 2

From proposals to projects:

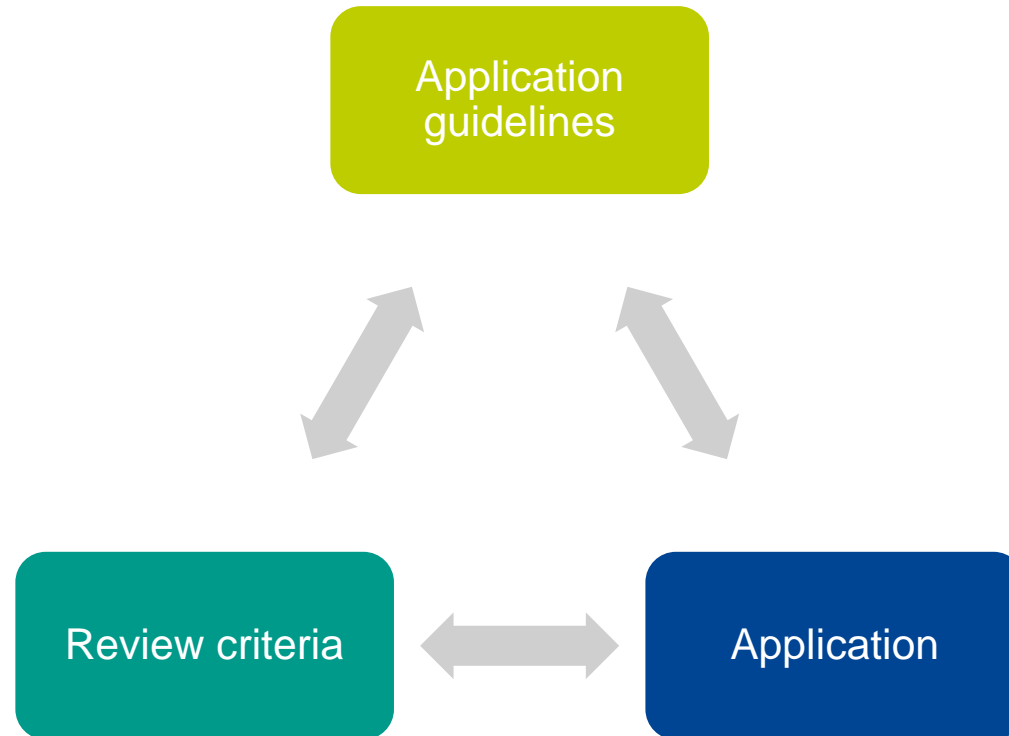
Presenting the right ideas to the right people in the right way

Application guidelines and questions for reviewers

(Stand-Alone Projects)

# Objective of Module 2

To demonstrate the relationship between



**Demonstration based on a specific example**

## Application basics

- Choice of topic: Bottom-up (i.e. determined by applicants)
- Type of research: Scholarly research designed to generate new knowledge
- Eligibility: Based on residence (Austria); scientific qualification (publications)
- Quotas: None
- Processing time: Ø 4.6 months (in programmes with no application deadlines)



# Application guidelines

## Stand-alone projects (I)

### 1. Scientific/scholarly aspects

- Clearly defined aims and hypotheses or research question(s) of the project
- Description of the project's anticipated level of originality or scientific/scholarly innovation
- Relevance to international research in the field (international state of research)
- Methods
- Intended cooperation arrangements (national and/or international)
- Work plan and timeline
- All potential ethical, safety-related, or regulatory aspects
- All potential sex-specific and gender-related aspects

# Application guidelines

## Stand-alone projects (II)

### 2. Human resources

- Research-related qualifications of the researchers involved

### 3. Financial aspects (use template structure)

- Information on the research institution and those of the national research partners
  - Available personnel (not financed by the FWF)
  - Available infrastructure
- Information on the funding requested
  - Concise justifications for the personnel requested
  - Concise justifications for non-personnel cost

# Formal application requirements\* (I)

Project description ⇒ no more than 50,000 characters, 20 pages (see format requirements) including table of contents, figures and tables

- Annex 1: Information on research institution(s) and justification of requested funding
- Annex 2: List of references ⇒ no more than 5 pages
- Annex 3: Academic CV, 10 most important publications in entire career, description of previous research achievements (no more than three pages per person); for PI and maximum 3 more researchers
- Annex 4: Confirmations of all national and international cooperation partners (cooperation letters, no more than 1 page)
- Forms ⇒ Affirmation of research institution

\*: for a complete description see application guidelines

## Formal application requirements (II)

Attachments to be uploaded separately:

- Publication list of all the key project participants for the last 5 years, broken down into peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed (mandatory, for FWF internal use only)
- If applicable: accompanying letter to the application
- List of reviewers to be excluded
- Report on results or final report, for follow-up applications
- For resubmissions:
  - overview of all changes made in the resubmitted application
  - response(s) to reviews
- vendor quotes for equipment, etc.

## Structured abstract

**Academic abstract** in **English** comprising no more than 3,000 characters

The academic abstract will be used to inform potential reviewers about the project. The abstract must be subdivided into the following sections using the given terms:

- Wider research context / theoretical framework
- Hypotheses / research questions / objectives
- Approach / methods
- Level of originality / innovation
- Primary researchers involved

## Note to reviewers on equal opportunities

In all of its programmes, the FWF actively supports equal opportunities and equal treatment. **The review of an application must not put the applicant at a disadvantage for non-scientific/non-scholarly reasons such as age, gender, etc.** For example, the assessment of research proposals should not be based on the applicants' actual age, but instead on the individual circumstances relating to the duration of their scientific/scholarly careers and previous research achievements.

The FWF endeavours to ensure equal opportunities for all applicants and thus takes into consideration if delays in the scientific/scholarly careers of applicants such as gaps in publication activity or less time spent abroad have been unavoidable (e.g. due to longer qualification periods, time spent raising children, long-term illness etc.). When preparing your review, please keep in mind that your comments in Section I will be forwarded in their entirety to the applicant (without including your name).

# Questions to the reviewers (I)

Section 1 (to be transmitted to the applicant in its entirety):

1. Level of originality or scientific/scholarly innovation of the application

Excellent	Very good	Good	Average	Poor
-----------	-----------	------	---------	------

2. Scientific/scholarly quality of the proposal

Excellent	Very good	Good	Average	Poor
-----------	-----------	------	---------	------

3. Approach/methods and feasibility of the proposal

Excellent	Very good	Good	Average	Poor
-----------	-----------	------	---------	------

4. Research-related qualifications – in relation to the length of their careers – of the researchers involved

Excellent	Very good	Good	Average	Poor
-----------	-----------	------	---------	------

5. Other aspects:

- Ethical aspects
- Sex-specific and gender-related aspects

## Questions to the reviewers (II)

6. Overall evaluation with consideration of the key strengths and weaknesses. Please give a clear recommendation for or against funding a project.

	Excellent – funding with highest priority
	Very Good – funding with high priority
	Good – resubmission with some revisions
	Average – resubmission with major revisions
	Poor – rejection

Please note that the FWF places high demands on the quality of the projects it funds and thus predominantly supports projects rated as 'very good' or 'excellent'.



## Questions to the reviewers (III)

### **Section 1b (confidential remarks exclusively to the applicant)**

Recommendations (optional): reviewer's recommendations to the applicants for implementing the project (in the case of approval). The recommendations made here generally should not play a role in the funding decision

### **Section 2 (confidential remarks to the FWF)**

Other comments intended solely for the FWF.

# Notes on the FWF evaluation form (I)

The FWF provides the reviewers with a brief explanation of the quality standards that should form the basis for the formal ratings:

**Excellent = funding with highest priority**

The proposed research project is among the best 5% in the field worldwide. It is potentially groundbreaking and/or makes a major contribution to knowledge. The applicant and the researchers involved possess – relative to their academic age – exceptional qualifications by international standards.

**Very Good = funding with high priority**

The proposed research project is among the best 15% in the field worldwide. It is at the forefront internationally, but minor improvements could be made. The applicant and the researchers involved possess – relative to their academic age – high qualifications by international standards.

# Notes on the FWF evaluation form (II)

## **Good = resubmission with some revisions**

The proposed research project is internationally competitive but has some weaknesses, and/or the applicant and the researchers involved possess – relative to their academic age – good qualifications by international standards.

## **Average = resubmission with major revisions**

The proposed research project will provide some new insights but has significant weaknesses and/or the applicant and the researchers involved possess – relative to their academic age – fair qualifications by international standards.

## **Poor = rejection**

The proposed research project is weak and/or the applicant and the researchers involved lack sufficient qualifications by international standards.

# Standardised reasons for rejection in the decision letter (I)

1

The reviews of your application were entirely positive with regard to the research project itself as well as your research qualifications. However, the reviewers expressed even greater support for other applications. For budget-related reasons, the FWF can currently only approve those applications which receive the most favourable reviews and ratings; this means that your application could not be approved. If you choose to resubmit your application, please place greater emphasis on the strengths of the project in order to improve your chances of approval.

2

The reviews of your application were predominantly positive with regard to the research project itself as well as your research qualifications. However, there were several minor points of criticism in the review, and the reviewers expressed greater support for other applications. For budget-related reasons, the FWF can currently only approve those applications which receive the most favourable reviews and ratings; this means that your application could not be approved. If you choose to resubmit your application, please place greater emphasis on the strengths of the project and take the reviewers' suggestions into account in order to improve your chances of approval.

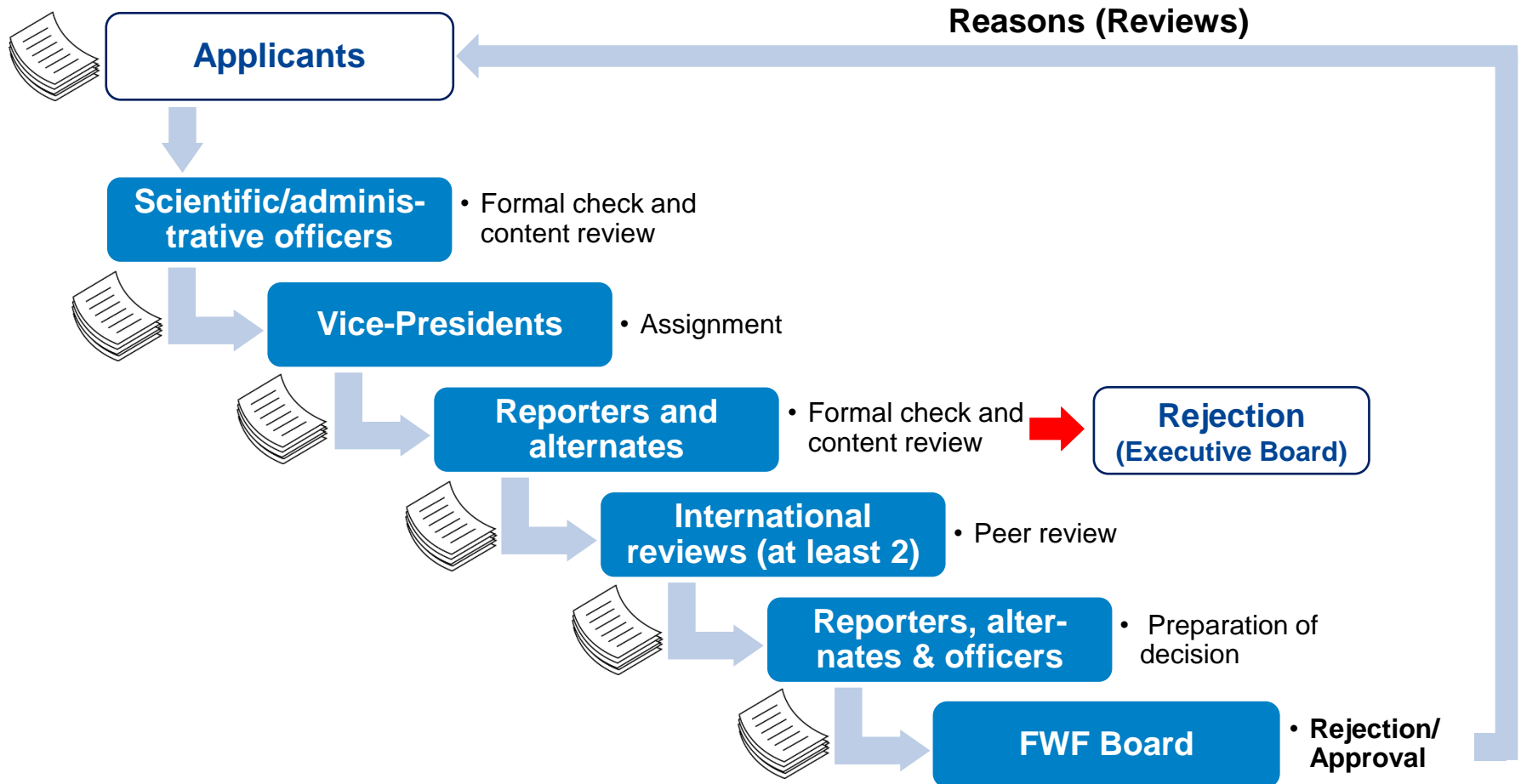
## Standardised reasons for rejection in the decision letter (II)

3	<p>The reviews of your application were largely positive with regard to the research project itself and/or your research qualifications. However, there were a number of points of criticism in the review, meaning that your application cannot be approved in its current form. If you choose to resubmit your application, please focus on the strengths of the project and take the reviewers' comments and suggestions into account visibly and in a transparent manner.</p>
4	<p>The reviews of your application were only partly positive with regard to the research project itself and/or your research qualifications. However, there were numerous points of criticism in the review, meaning that the application would have to be revised substantially and possibly re-oriented in order to be eligible for funding. If you choose to resubmit your application, please take the reviewers' comments and suggestions into account visibly and in a transparent manner.</p>
5	<p>The reviews of your application were predominantly very critical. As it cannot be assumed that the weaknesses in the application can be remedied within a short period of time, the FWF Board has decided that a resubmission to this funding programme will only be permitted after a period of 12 months (starting from the decision date).</p>

# Module 3

## Procedures and decision-making

# The FWF Decision-Making Procedure



# FWF procedures

## Key points

- Strict bottom-up principle: No thematic requirements, no quotas, no preferential treatment
- Multiple checks in all steps of procedure and decisions
- Close interaction with applicant to maximise transparency
- Independent, international peer review as the basis for quality assurance
- Text of reviews as most important basis for decisions (ratings treated as mere indicators)
- Discussion of and decisions on all projects from all disciplines during an FWF Board meeting with representatives from all disciplines



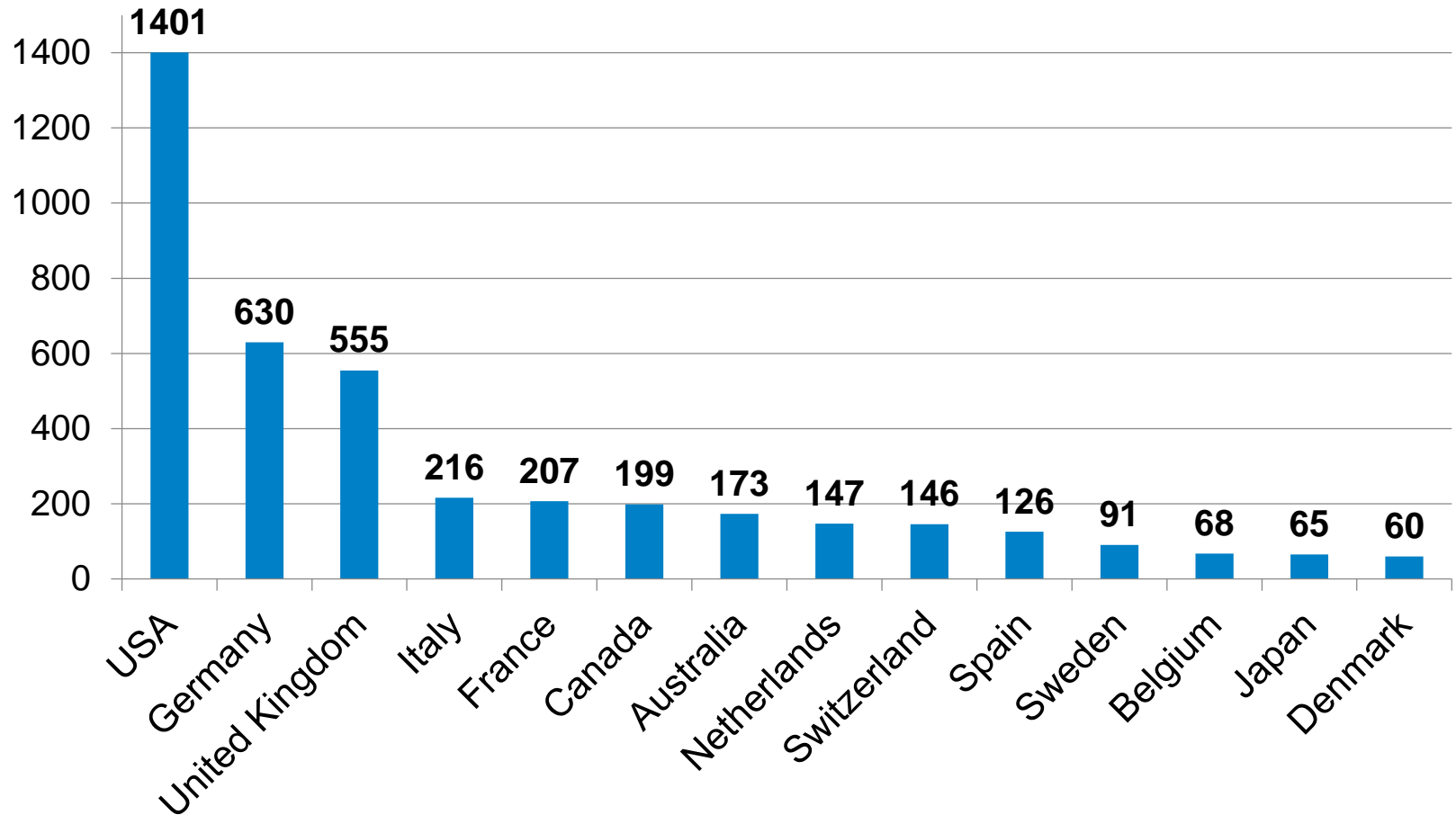
# Principles of the review process

Quality benchmark	→	International research community
Peer review	→	All reviewers based outside Austria
FWF reporters	→	nomination of expert reviewers
FWF Executive Board	→	Appointment of reviewers
Number of reviews	→	2
Meetings	→	5 per year
Decisions	→	Issued by FWF Board on basis of reviews
Reasoning	→	Reviews
Ex-post reviews	→	Peer review of final reports

## Basic principles of reviewer selection

- Reviewers must be experts based outside of Austria and still active in the field; they must be at least at the same level as the applicant.
- Reviewers are always chosen specifically for each application, no fixed reviewer selections (no more than two reviews per year; 90% have never written a review for the FWF)
- Regional distribution of reviewers
- Objective: steady increase in share of women among reviewers
- In smaller disciplines, "generalists" may also be called upon for reviews.
- "Negative list": possible exclusion of up to three reviewers
- Abstract is sent first in order to ensure suitability
- Examination of potential biases by FWF Office
- Reviewers required to submit declaration regarding bias

## Reviews received by country (2018)



# Module 4

## Application tips

# Key aspects of applications

## Enthusiasm among reviewers

- Presentation of state of the art in international research, positioning of project in relation to state of the art
- Clearly defined, focused research questions/hypotheses
- Presentation of preliminary research
- Description of scientific innovation or novelty
- Concise and clear description of methods and work plan
- Completeness and substance of descriptions and required expertise
- Transparent justification of costs
- Comprehensible English
  
- **Shortcomings in the areas listed above are the most common sources of reviewer criticism.**
- **We recommend tolerance and endurance: "Don't complain – resubmit!"**

## Dont's – Examples from reviews (I)

- Type of research
  - “...the proposal does not formulate any new research hypothesis or addresses any fundamentally new techniques. Its main method is a review and selection of existing solutions for the different parts of the overall problem, their assembly into a prototype, and an evaluation using synthetic data. This is a very much engineering-style approach; not necessarily bad, but without contributions to basic science.”
- Focus
  - “The purpose of this proposal is not very clear with so many research targets without clear logic.”
- Innovation
  - “proposal is an obvious one.”
- Research question
  - “The proposed conceptual framing is mostly used in general way (###), therefore I could not identify any puzzle that would arouse a specific deep interest and curiosity.”
- Hypotheses
  - “One has to read until page 14 to find the first conjecture.”

## Dont's – Examples from reviews (II)

- Method
  - “While the entire package of methods is impressive, there is little to no explanation of why each particular method was selected, other than prior experience of the investigators.”
- Case selection
  - “There is no justification for the chosen countries and case study regions.”
- Work plan
  - “The project bears significant risk of failing at the first stage, which would preclude it from reaching any significant results.”
- State of the art
  - “The authors failed to include the most recent literature , and they provide a simplistic view on the topic. The applicants embrace a particular view on ... Other views, supported by existing literature, were not considered by the applicant.”
- Human resources
  - “This is an extremely competitive topic with many groups tackling these questions for many years. I'm not sure this application has exciting tools or technologies in place that are not available elsewhere.”

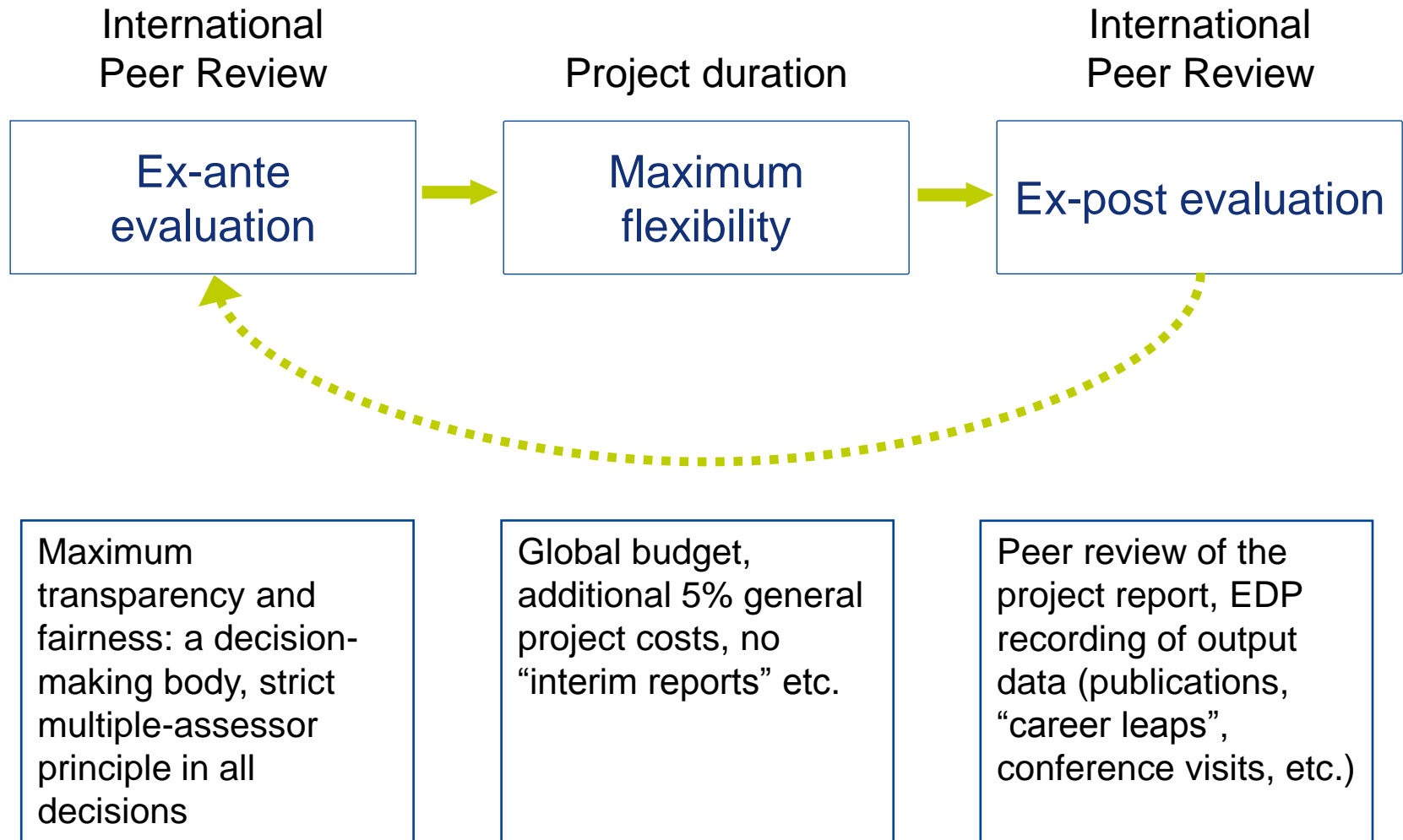
# Conclusion

Quality assurance

FWF perspective



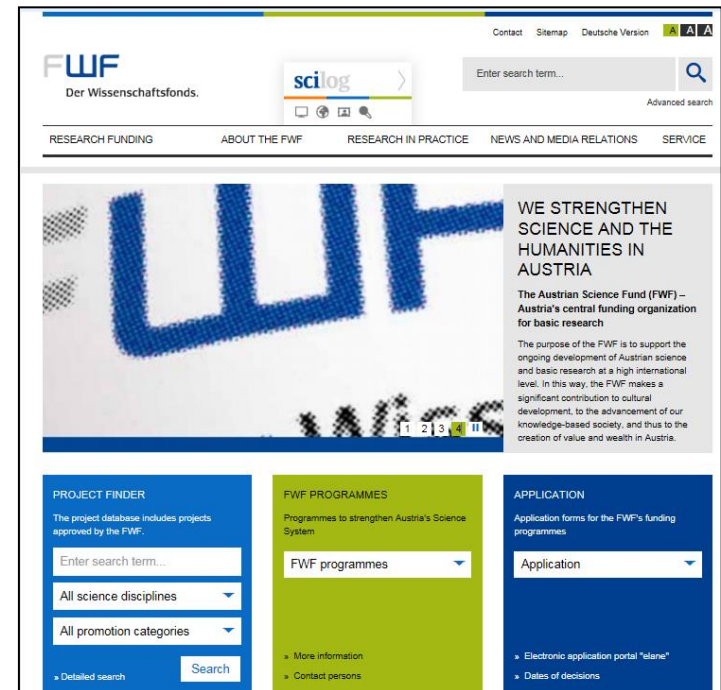
# Controlling (quality control)



# The FWF website

## The information resource

- **FWF-Website: [www.fwf.ac.at](http://www.fwf.ac.at)**
  - **Funding programmes overview**
  - **Application documents**
  - **Principles of the decision-making process**
  - **Contact directory**





Der Wissenschaftsfonds.

**EXPLORING NEW FRONTIERS**

**CULTIVATING TALENTS**

**REALISING NEW IDEAS**

**FUNDING  
THE WAY FORWARD**