

WISSENSCHAFT ZUKUNFT PREIS 2026

FUNDING GUIDELINES

MASTER / DIPLOMA THESIS

AND

DISSERTATIONEN / PHD-THESIS

VALID FROM DECEMBER 2025



DEADLINE: 26 FEBRUARY – 8 APRIL 2026

SUBMISSIONS: preise.einreichsystem.at

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PREFACE

The Wissenschaft Zukunft Preis (WZP) of Gesellschaft für Forschungsförderung Niederösterreich (GFF) is awarded annually.

The WZP is open to all topics, has no age limit and covers all scientific disciplines. The WZP only rewards academic theses rated "very good" (or equivalent) with a reference to Lower Austria.

Awards are given to

- **Master/Diploma theses**
- **Dissertations/PhD theses.**

I OBJECTIVE

The aim of the WZP is to highlight and reward high quality scientific achievement by academics at the beginning of their scientific careers. The prize is intended to be an additional motivation for the winners to continue working and researching in the respective scientific field.

2 PRIZE MONEY

- Master's thesis/diploma thesis, each € 1.500,-
- Dissertation/Doctoral Thesis, each € 3.000,-

Three master's/diploma theses and two dissertations/doctoral theses will be awarded.

The announcement and presentation of the WZP awards will take place during the Lower Austria Science Awards ceremony in fall 2027.

3 GUIDELINES

- There is no age limit.
- There is no thematic restriction. Papers from all scientific disciplines can be submitted.
- Lower Austrian reference: the work must have a clear connection to Lower Austria. See chapter 7 "Evaluation criteria".
- Theses must meet the following criteria:
 - The thesis must have been graded "very good" (or equivalent).
 - The degree programme in which the thesis was written - a FH degree programme or a university degree programme at an Austrian or European university - must have been successfully completed.
 - The submission, or thesis, may be written in German or English.

- The thesis must not be older than three years. The earliest date for approval is therefore 2023.
- Only first degree theses (e.g. first Master's thesis/Diploma thesis, first doctoral thesis/dissertation) will be accepted.
- Theses from university and polytechnic courses are not eligible.
- Theses with a blocking notice will not be accepted.
- Submission is only possible online. The submission must be complete, on time and formally correct.

4 SUBMISSION PROCESS

Submission to the WZP can only be made online at preise.einreichsystem.at and must be submitted by the deadline.

Please note that the WZP will no longer be awarded if the Science Prize of Lower Austria is awarded.

The submission period runs from **February 26 to April 8, 2026** (23:55).

REQUIRED SUBMISSION DOCUMENTS

A fully completed online application includes

- Personal data and information on the study or research topic.

Please note that the following four points must be completed directly on the application form:

- Please describe your research motivation.
- What are the (scientific) results and findings of your thesis? What is special about them and how new are they?
- How do your results and findings relate to future scientific questions or practical applications?
- Please describe the reference and/or relevance of your research for Lower Austria.

In addition, the following documents are required as uploads:

- Executive summary of the thesis.
- Evaluation report, certificate or document proving the grade "very good" or equivalent.
- Confirmation of positive graduation for the submitted thesis.
- Curriculum vitae.
- List of publications:

- for Master/Diploma thesis if available.
- Obligatory for doctoral thesis.
- The complete thesis in electronic form.
- Listed collaborations with companies in Lower Austria must be confirmed by a letter from the company.

5 REVIEW PROCESS

All timely and complete submissions will be subject to a three-stage review process.

Stage 1 Review of submissions for formal completeness by GFF: All required documents must be uploaded in full by the end of the submission deadline. The work must be directly related to Lower Austria.

- Formally complete submissions with relevance to Lower Austria will be activated in the submission system for review by the jurors.
- Formally incomplete submissions or submissions without reference to Lower Austria will be excluded. Submitters will be informed by e-mail of their exclusion from the evaluation process.

Stage 2 Evaluation (mid-April to mid-May):

Pre-selection: As part of the pre-selection process, each juror selects the five most promising master's/diploma theses and five doctoral/PhD theses from among all submissions approved by the GFF. These are then subjected to a comprehensive review and qualify for the jury meeting. The remaining submissions are excluded from the review process.

Pre-selection is based on the information provided directly in the application form. This includes information on the motivation for the research, scientific results and findings, and the relevance of the submitted research/thesis for Lower Austria, including the executive summary.

Stage 3 Jury meeting (End of May):

At the jury meeting, all fully assessed applications are discussed by the jurors and the award winners will be jointly decided. Three master's/diploma theses and two doctoral/PhD theses will be awarded.

6 AWARD CEREMONY

The WZP awards will be announced and presented during the Lower Austria Science Awards ceremony in fall 2027.

7 THE ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

CRITERIA 1: IS THERE A REFERENCE TO LOWER AUSTRIA? → YES/NO ASSESSMENT

The reference to Lower Austria is given if at least one of the four criteria listed below is fulfilled. If none of the four criteria is met, the entry will not be evaluated. The **residence** of the submitter in Lower Austria **is not relevant** for the evaluation of the relevance to Lower Austria.

- The thesis was written at a Lower Austrian research institution/as part of a Lower Austrian study programme.
- The research dealt with in the thesis is directly related to Lower Austria.
- The thesis was written in cooperation with companies in Lower Austria.
- Part of the study was carried out in Lower Austria. This means that at least 50% of the surveys, questionnaires, etc. were carried out in Lower Austria.

CRITERION 2: ORIGINALITY AND INNOVATION OF THE THESIS

Score achievable	Criteria
0 - 3	How novel is the topic/question of the thesis, or does it address a topic that has rarely been addressed?
0 - 3	The topic/question addressed is important for a positive future development (in the respective research area).
0 - 3	What (scientific) findings did the thesis produce and how novel are they?
9	Maximum points achievable

CRITERION 3: QUALITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE METHODS OF THE THESIS

Score achievable	Criteria
0 - 3	How does the methodology operationalize the concept and goal?
0 - 3	Are these methods appropriate for answering the thesis's research question?
0 - 3	Are the formulated research questions or hypotheses adequate and conclusive?
9	Maximum points achievable

OPTIONAL, CRITERIA 4: FREE EVALUATION → AWARDING UP TO 2 POINTS

This section can be used for additional comments and assessments that are not covered or not sufficiently covered by the criteria and that should be emphasized and evaluated in connection with the thesis. Up to **2 additional points** may be awarded.

8 COPYRIGHTS AND DATA PROTECTION

The submitters must be creators of the submitted works and thus authors within the meaning of § 10 para. 1 of the Copyright Act, BGBl No. 111/1936, as amended.

By submitting the application, the applicant agrees to grant both the GFF and the federal state of Lower Austria, free of charge, the right to use the award-winning work in connection with the award ceremony and to present it at any events.

By submitting an entry, the applicant agrees that, if the Science Future Prize is awarded, the name of the prize winner, the award-winning work, and the amount of the science prize will be published on the websites of both the GFF and the Province of Lower Austria, as well as in other appropriate media outlets in the Province of Lower Austria.

Furthermore, by submitting the application, the applicant expressly agrees that, if the Wissenschaft Zukunft Prize is awarded, the GFF or the Province of Lower Austria may process the data of the prizewinner in accordance with the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act (DSG), Federal Law Gazette I No. 165/1999, as amended, for reporting on the occasion of the presentation of the science prizes and for promoting the science landscape of Lower Austria in various media.

9 FINAL PROVISIONS

These guidelines do not constitute a legal entitlement to a grant, neither with regard to the reason nor the amount.

The place of jurisdiction for all disputes arising from the grant is the Landesgericht St. Pölten.

These guidelines enter into force on 4.12.2025 and apply to the WZP 2026. Amendments and the current version will be published on the GFF website.