

USIAS CALL FOR FELLOWSHIPS - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Information on the call webpage and in the Guidelines for applicants should cover most of your queries. We recommend you check there before contacting the USIAS office with questions.

Here are some questions that come up frequently (click on the section or question that interests you to go directly to a specific question):

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Criteria and eligibility

Am I eligible for a Fellowship?

You are eligible if you are a researcher with a doctorate or comparable degree currently employed at the level of at least assistant professor (tenure track) or equivalent. In France, this corresponds to permanent post at the level of *maître de conférences* or *chargé de recherche* or equivalent. This typically corresponds to the levels of Established Researcher (R3) or Leading Researcher (R4) as defined by the [European Commission](#). Emeritus professors who are still active researchers can also submit an application.

You are not eligible in principle if you do not have a permanent position, or your position is not senior enough (e.g. post-doctoral level).

I applied in the past – can I apply again?

You can apply again with the same or with a new proposal if you were not an applicant under last year's call OR if you were an applicant under the last call and your proposal passed the pre-selection stage and was evaluated in the international peer review process.

However, you cannot apply this year if you have already applied for a Fellowship for two consecutive years. This applies even if the proposal is different from the last application.

I have already had a USIAS or FRIAS-USIAS Fellowship – can I apply again?

Yes, provided your project ended at least five years before the call submission date, i.e. for an application that will be submitted under this call, your project must have ended in or before 2018. Please check with the office if in doubt.

Can I apply together with another person?

It is possible to submit a joint proposal, with a maximum of three applicants for any one project. Each successful applicant would become a Fellow and each should therefore play an equally substantial role. Please note that your project can include other collaborators (post-docs, engineers, experts who contribute to a specific area) who are not applicants.

Applicants should in principle not be from the same organisation or research unit in Strasbourg, and collaboration between different disciplines is particularly welcome.

Is the call limited to specific fields or domains?

No, the call is open to researchers in all fields and domains.

Can researchers from any country apply?

Yes. The call is open to eligible researchers from any country.

Can I submit two proposals?

No, you can only submit one proposal per call.

Does it matter if I apply to other funding organisations at the same time?

No, your proposal will not be treated or reviewed differently on account of this. Please note, however, that you are required to specify the applications to other organisations in your application and indicate if there is any overlap with the USIAS application in content and/or time period. Please inform USIAS immediately if you decide to accept fellowship funding from another organisation so that we can see in what way it may affect your application to USIAS.

Do you have any guidance for drafting the proposal?

The proposal is expected to be succinct, concise but clear; so make sure that you clearly describe the project - main aims, methodology and work plan, and explain the roles of applicants and collaborators. It should

provide sufficient information for the proposal reviewers to evaluate the originality, feasibility, significance, excellence of the proposal.

For a more detailed description of these four criteria, you can refer to the question “How is the proposal evaluated?” in the section on the Assessment process.

I'm resubmitting a proposal - any advice?

We recommend that you take a look at the international peer evaluations of your last proposal (if applicable) and carefully consider any remarks for improving or clarifying the last proposal.

Application

How do I apply?

Applicants need to apply using the call platform (see call webpage). Incomplete applications or applications that do not correspond to the criteria defined for fellowships will not be eligible, and no applications will be accepted after the call deadline.

What language should the application be made in?

In English, to enable international peer review. An exception can be made for SSH candidates where the subject clearly calls for an application in French, e.g. French literature, and where the external reviewers will be francophone. However, applicants must check this with the USIAS office prior to submission.

Is there a specific format/template?

Yes, applicants are required to fill out a standard application form and submit a number of documents (templates are provided on the call webpage). The section “Preparing an application” in the guidelines provides information on length and what they should include.

Do all applicants have to include a CV?

Each applicant is expected to include a CV with a track record and grant history (using the template provided).

Can my project include collaborators?

Yes, the proposal can include other collaborators (post-doc, engineer, experts who contribute to a specific area) according to the needs of the project. These persons are not considered as applicants and would not become Fellows. Please describe their intended function and tasks in the proposal.

The Strasbourg host for external Fellows may be considered as a collaborator.

Can I employ researchers within my project?

Yes, it is possible to employ e.g. a post-doc, engineer, doctoral student or research assistant as part of the project. The duration of these positions cannot surpass the duration of the project and the positions are expected to be based in Strasbourg.

How long can my project last?

A Fellowship project must last minimum 3 and maximum 24 months.

The call says the project must start between 1 September and 1 December. Is there any flexibility on this time frame of the start date?

The project should start in the indicated year of the call. In case of acceptance, the USIAS office will work with you to decide upon the best starting date.

Budget

How much funding can I apply for?

Costs are expected to be proportionate and reasonable in relation to the project content and duration. The upper limit is 180 k€ and the budget should provide a preliminary but realistic estimate of the costs.

Which types of costs can be included in a budget?

The budget can include costs such as human resources (post-doc, research assistant...), reimbursement of salary costs (external applicants only), teaching dispensation (internal applicants only), operating costs, equipment, consumables, events, travel, etc.

All costs must be included in the budget; there are no additional stipends.

Is the budget an estimate or final?

In case of acceptance, the USIAS office will work with you to finalise the budget, within the amount of the award offered. Costs (or cost components) that cannot be justified or are out of proportion may be cut or reduced by the Board as part of the selection decision. In any case, the final project budget cannot exceed the maximum Fellowship award.

Do I need to include quotes?

No, you do not need to include any quotes or justification at this stage. You can refer to a quote for expensive equipment.

Should the budget include VAT?

No, the budget does not need to include value-added tax (VAT), as the university is not liable for it in most cases.

External applicants

What does external mean?

External means that you are not employed in Strasbourg, by the University of Strasbourg, or the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) or other academic research institutes in Strasbourg.

Why do I need a host?

A host is necessary to ensure that you will be able to connect to the relevant academic community in Strasbourg and to provide a stable contact for your research. The aim is that external Fellows will fully benefit from the rich academic environment in Strasbourg and vice versa, that the Strasbourg community will benefit from the presence of Fellows from outside bringing new ideas, knowledge, perspectives, contacts.

How do I identify a host and can USIAS help me?

Please refer to the [list of research units](#) to identify and contact a suitable host. This involves finding a match in terms of academic content and context, which is done in direct interaction between applicants and potential Strasbourg hosts without intermediation by the USIAS office.

Can my host also be an applicant?

Yes, your Strasbourg-based host can also be a co-applicant (and would then also be a Fellow in case of selection). The choice between host and applicant depends upon the involvement of the Strasbourg person in the project – will they act as facilitator, i.e. help you find your feet and connect to the academic community, or will they play a much more active role and be involved in the project and research?

How much time do I need to plan in Strasbourg?

A USIAS Fellowship is residential, that the Fellow is expected to live and work in Strasbourg during the Fellowship. You are expected to spend be physically present in Strasbourg for at least 50% of the fellowship period. On the application form, you will be asked to include a short paragraph to describe your plans in terms of activities and presence in Strasbourg. Please be specific about the periods you plan to spend.

Can my project include salary?

USIAS can finance a partial reimbursement of salary to the home institution of external applicants to cover teaching and administrative replacement costs. Candidates should make sure they have advance consent from their home institution to use their time to come to Strasbourg and to work on the proposed project at USIAS, in case of selection. Candidates may also envisage taking a sabbatical; if the salary is lower during sabbatical, a living cost complement may be possible. For Fellows from countries where salaries and living costs are significantly lower than the equivalent in France, an income complement can be considered in order to compensate for this.

All estimated costs must be included in the budget (including the full salary amount to be reimbursed, not your take-home salary amount); there are no additional stipends.

Is there additional financial support for my family?

Travel expenses to Strasbourg for partners and children under 18 who are still living in the household can be included in the project budget, within certain limits.

Please note that most schools in France are public and free.

Internal applicants

What does internal mean?

Internal means that you have a permanent academic position within one of the [research units](#) of the University of Strasbourg and/or French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) and equivalent research organisations.

Why is a change of research direction required for internal candidates?

Increasingly, specialisation in research is rewarded in terms of funding, publications and promotions. This leads to an unintended conservatism in research, where researchers remain in an area they already know, in order to maximize their career chances. To counterbalance this trend, USIAS funds research that is not merely an obvious next step for the researcher, but which requires them to leave their comfort zone, to venture out into new areas, to apply skills and knowledge to new topics.

USIAS enables researchers to work on ideas that may be risky but inspiring and possibly path-breaking, and which would not usually - or not at all - be considered by regular research funding organisations.

Can I ask for teaching dispensation?

Yes, candidates based in Strasbourg can ask for a teaching dispensation (limited to 50% of an annual teaching load, i.e. 96 hours per year of the Fellowship), with the consent of the dean of their faculty.

Assessment process

What happens to my proposal after submission?

1. **Eligibility check:** Applications will be checked to ensure that they fulfil the eligibility check and call criteria. Any ineligible applications will be disqualified.
2. **Pre-selection:** The USIAS Board will make a first pre-selection of applications received, based on the selection criteria mentioned in the call for proposals.
3. **Evaluation:** All applications that pass the pre-selection stage will be sent to international experts for peer review.
4. **Selection:** Based on the evaluations received from international experts, the USIAS Board will shortlist projects for the final selection. Shortlisted candidates may be invited to an interview. The Board will select 10-15 applications for the award of a USIAS Fellowship.

All candidates will be informed of the final outcome, and will receive the international peer evaluations of their proposal for information. A calendar with a timeline is available on the call webpage.

How is the proposal evaluated?

Proposals will be evaluated according to their originality, feasibility, significance, excellence and the quality of applicant(s), as well as on the individual criteria that apply to internal and external fellows.

- **Originality**, i.e., the novelty and creativity the proposed project embodies, in terms of perspective, topic, method, or other aspects.
- **Feasibility**, i.e., the probability that the proposed research can be successfully executed. Please note that a certain level of risk is acceptable, given that the call asks for particularly original projects which are not business-as-usual.
- **Significance**, i.e., the scientific importance of the research proposed, whether it will be a minor contribution or rather a step change to the field.
- **Excellence**, i.e., overall excellence of the project, the degree to which the proposed project seems outstanding, in terms of quality.
- **Quality of the applicant**, in terms of academic achievements, taking into account all relevant factors, including career stage.
- **For internal candidates** (from Strasbourg), it is important to show that the proposed research is a change of direction in research, with real new elements, requiring an above average investment of the researcher in a new topic or new method, venturing outside the comfort zone of their main specialism.
- **For external candidates** (from outside of Strasbourg), in addition to the scientific contribution of the proposed project, an important factor is what the candidate may bring to the Strasbourg academic community in terms of relevant expertise, connections, exchange and possible collaboration with Strasbourg colleagues.

When will I know if my proposal has been selected for a Fellowship?

All applicants will typically be informed of the final outcome in March of the year following the call deadline.

What are my chances for success?

The average success rate over all calls is around 20%.