

Turku Institute for Advanced Studies (TIAS) Turku Intersectoral Excellence Scheme 2 (TIES2)

Call for Applications 2025–2026

INSTRUCTIONS FOR REVIEWERS

1. Turku Institute for Advanced Studies (TIAS)

Turku Institute for Advanced Studies (TIAS) promotes cutting-edge university research in humanities and social sciences. This includes studies in arts and literature, cultural studies, history, languages, linguistics, speech-language pathology, economics, business studies, education, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, social policy, social work, sociology, research methodology, and their equivalents. Funded by the Faculties of Education, Humanities, Law, Social Sciences and the Turku School of Economics, TIAS is an integral and permanent part of the University of Turku.

TIAS is a research collegium which supports the bottom-up development of excellent early- and mid-career stage academics through the provision of three years of funding, enabling them to carry out self-designed research projects. TIAS selects its researchers through an international competition, which is open to all researchers in the respective fields. Successful candidates must have a doctoral degree, provide evidence of their ability to work in an interdisciplinary research environment of a high international standard and have other academic achievements.

2. Turku Intersectoral Excellence Scheme 2 (TIES2) and the role of reviewers

The TIAS Turku Intersectoral Excellence Scheme 2 (TIES2)¹ is jointly funded by the European Union's Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions (MSCA) COFUND programme and the University of Turku. It is a ground-breaking fellowship scheme combining the Institute for Advanced Studies (IAS) model of elite, bottom-up postdoctoral research with an intersectoral approach. TIES2 has been developed in order to enhance TIAS' provisions by offering a special opportunity for outstanding researchers to undertake a three-year research project of their own design which must directly concern at least one non-higher education sector organisation of the applicant's own choosing.

The TIES2 programme has been developed in consultation with a number of partners and is designed to give cutting-edge researchers the possibility of conducting research in

¹ TIES2 is co-funded by the European Union's MSCA programme (Grant Agreement nr. 101217329). However, the views and opinions expressed here are those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the MSCA programme. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

conjunction with chosen partners located outside of higher education. All TIES2 Fellows must spend a secondment period of between three and twelve months within an organisation which is external to higher education, for the purpose of research and/or training. By supporting these secondments TIES2's ambition is to develop a cohort of expert researchers able to spot and develop opportunities across and beyond higher education.

TIES2 is aimed at early- and mid-career researchers who must be within eight years of completing their PhD (with exceptions for paternity leave, national service etc.). They must submit a research plan which includes a secondment to an organisation outside of higher education. Assessment of the secondment plans forms part of the evaluation of applicants' proposals. Applicants must also meet the EU's mobility requirement that in the 36 months preceding the closing date for applications (9 January 2026) they must not have spent more than 12 months in the host country (Finland).

Applicants' eligibility will be checked prior to applications being sent for external review.

All applications received before the deadline and meeting the eligibility requirements are sent for external review. On the basis of the external evaluations the TIES2 Selection Committee will select the appointees. The final decisions are based on the expert review statements on the quality of the research proposals and the other academic merits. Other factors such as gender and other diversity aspects may also be taken in to account when making final decisions.

TIAS will select up to ten (10) TIES2 Fellows for a three-year period starting from 1 September 2026.

3. Evaluation criteria

Please note that under MSCA rules all eligible candidates must be sent for external review and TIAS does not undertake any pre-screening of eligible candidates' applications.

In the evaluation of the project plan, the key issue for the evaluation is academic quality. TIES2 reviewers are also encouraged to take into account the innovativeness of the research plan within its field, documented international collaboration and potential for groundbreaking research. The focus is on evaluating scientific quality based on **three key criteria: 1) excellence, 2) impact, and 3) quality and efficiency of implementation.**

(i) Criteria for evaluating the Excellence of the applicant and research project (50 %)

Please balance the applicant's qualifications and the project's scientific merit, considering both equally.

- The overall quality and impact of the applicant's research outputs, considering alignment with international standards, as outlined in the [European Charter for Researchers](#).
- Record of previous activities including teaching, supervision, knowledge transfer, public outreach, and innovation, in accordance with [DORA recommendations](#) and the European Charter's emphasis on diverse academic and non-academic roles.

- Applicant's involvement in international collaborations that can significantly contribute to the success of the plan.
- Recognition through awards, funding, and other accolades, reflecting diverse forms of achievements.
- The project's uniqueness, ambition, and innovation, including its potential to advance or challenge current knowledge and methodologies.
- Theoretical and methodological robustness: The relevance and justification of the proposed theoretical framework and research methods, including interdisciplinary approaches.
- Quality of collaborations and external activities: The relevance and contribution of proposed partners and external activities, with an explicit emphasis on interdisciplinary and intersectoral collaboration.
- Quality of proposed outputs including Open Science practices.

(ii) Criteria for evaluating the Impact (30 %)

- **Scientific:** The project's contribution to advancing knowledge in its field, including the potential for ground-breaking discoveries and methodological advancements.
- **Researcher development and career:** The project's potential to enhance the applicant's professional growth, including the development of new skills, research independence, and overall career advancement.
- **Social:** The project's relevance and benefits to society, including how it addresses social challenges, contributes to public policy, improves quality of life, and engages the public through dissemination and outreach.

(iii) Criteria for evaluating the Quality and Efficiency of Implementation (20 %)

- The coherence, effectiveness, and thoroughness of the project's methodological framework and work plan.
- The appropriateness of task distribution and resource allocation.
- Relevance and suitability of planned secondments to the project.
- Alignment with the research themes and existing work at the University of Turku.
- The likelihood of completing the project within the 36-month fellowship period.

4. Scoring

For each abovementioned criterion please provide: (i) a score between 1 and 5, with a resolution of one decimal place and (ii) short comments summarising any strengths and/or weaknesses (max. 150 words).

Please also draw to attention any areas of ethical concern in the application. Applicants are required to comply with responsible conduct of research and adhere to the guidelines of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity. Please see [The Finnish Code of Conduct for](#)

[Research Integrity and Procedures for Handling Alleged Violations of Research Integrity in Finland 2023 \(PDF\).](#)

The comments are particularly valuable to the TIES2 Selection Committee in its decision-making process. After the funding decisions, evaluations will be sent to applicants. The evaluations can therefore provide applicants with important guidance in drafting future proposals.

It is important to comment both on the strengths and the weaknesses of the application. When your rating is below 4 (very good), please elaborate especially on the weaknesses in addition to the strengths, in order to provide more information for the Selection Committee.

Please rate the application using the scale below. You are encouraged to use the whole scale.

5 Excellent: Proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

4 Very Good: Proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.

3 Good. Proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.

2 Satisfactory: Proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.

1 Poor: Criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.

5. Conflict of interest

Reviewers are required to declare any personal interests according to the following criteria. Please disqualify yourself if you can in any way benefit from the approval or rejection of the proposal. You are asked to disqualify yourself also in the following circumstances:

- You are in close collaboration with the applicant (e.g. have co-authored and published an article with the applicant during the past three years, have been involved in the preparation of the application, or are involved in the publication or application of the results).
- You have been a superior, subordinate or instructor of the applicant.
- You have been the PhD examiner/opponent of the applicant.
- You are currently applying for the same post as the applicant.
- The applicant is a close person to you. A close person is:
 - your spouse (or *de facto*), child, grandchild, sibling, parent, grandparent or a person otherwise especially close to you (e.g. fiancé/e or a close friend), as well as their spouses (also *de facto*),
 - a sibling of your parent or his/her spouse (or *de facto*), a child of your sibling,
 - a child, grandchild, sibling, parent or grandparent of your spouse as well as their spouses (or *de facto*), a child of a sibling of a spouse,
 - a half-relative comparable to the above mentioned.

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Reviewers are also asked to disqualify themselves if their impartiality may otherwise be endangered or if they feel that there is a conflict of interest not specified above.

6. Confidentiality

In Finland, the Act on the Openness of Government Activities (621/1999) as well as EU Regulation 2016/679 on General Data Protection applies to application documents and expert evaluation statements. Research plans, abstracts, progress reports and evaluation statements are confidential documents. Application documents should therefore be handled and stored with due care and confidentiality.

Reviewers and members of the TIES Selection Committee are not allowed to disclose any information concerning application documents or evaluations to outsiders, nor are they allowed to use this confidential information to their own benefit or anyone else's benefit or disadvantage. In addition, reviewers may not reveal to outsiders that they are assessing the application of a particular candidate.