Global Research Initiative on Open Science

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GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

GRIOS CALL FOR EVIDENCE SYNTHESIS ON OPEN SCIENCE

Call name: GRIOS call for evidence synthesis 2026

Call description: The Global Research Initiative on Open Science (GRIOS) is an initiative aiming to promote more effective Open Science policies by synthesising our current knowledge about Open Science. GRIOS is seeking proposals to carry out evidence synthesis in Open Science topics identified by the initiative.

Call opening: 23 April 2026

Call deadline: 20 July 2026, 16:00h CEST*

Funding body: ESF on behalf of GRIOS

Eligible applicants: individual researcher, research team, organization, consortium, consultancy, for profit or non for profit, from all countries.

Expected duration of projects: 12 months

Maximum amount of funding per project: 80 000 EUR

Weblink for further information: www.grios.org

Contact: npappleroy@esf.org

Open Call platform:

- If you are a new user, please use this link : https://esf.smartsimple.ie/s_signup.jsp?token=XVtQC1oGYV5ZSxtZXxJXR1JWYUl1H3Rt
- If you have a SmartSimple account, log on here: https://esf.smartsimple.ie

**Please note that the platform for submission's time depends on the user's configured time zone and may or may not coincide with the time stated in these guidelines (this depends on the user, not the platform for submission). Any discrepancies in system time will not be grounds for a deadline extension.*

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1. Call Introduction

These guidelines provide instructions to applicants submitting proposals for the **GRIOS open call for proposals for evidence synthesis on Open Science.** They contain information about the topic of the call, the timeline, the eligibility criteria, the evaluation procedure, and the submission requirements.

Background and rationale

What is GRIOS and what are its objectives?

The Global Research Initiative on Open Science (GRIOS) aims to promote more effective Open Science policies by synthesising our current knowledge about Open Science (for full details: www.grios.org).

GRIOS is hosted by the European Science Foundation (ESF), and the call is managed by ESF, on behalf of GRIOS.

Open Science is hailed as a more inclusive, equitable, and effective form of performing science, offering increased benefits to both the global research community and society. While many research funders, research organisations, as well as national and international authorities have adopted Open Science policies, implementing Open Science strategies remains challenging, particularly when deciding among different models for funding, monitoring, evaluation, and infrastructure.

To overcome these hurdles and identify key barriers towards the global adoption of Open Science, stakeholders require the implementation of Open Science strategies to be based on evidence provided by existing scientific knowledge. This evidence-driven approach not only helps identify and fill crucial knowledge gaps but also plays a vital role in demonstrating the merits of Open Science to political decision-makers, the broader public, and the research community—ultimately boosting its widespread adoption.

The objectives of GRIOS are to:

- Produce reviews of existing research on Open Science worldwide, in order to synthesise current knowledge and identify opportunities and challenges.
- Formulate recommendations for Open Science policies based on the results of the scientific research highlighted by the reviews.
- Propose a research agenda to fill gaps in current knowledge on Open Science and promote new research on the subject.

The current call will fund reviews of existing research on Open Science worldwide, in order to synthesise current knowledge and identify opportunities and challenges.

The GRIOS leadership, with the guidance of the GRIOS Academic Advisory Board, have identified Open Science topics that are a priority for funders and policy-makers — areas where evidence-based Open Science policies are most needed and where scientific evidence is currently lacking.

Objectives

The objective of the call is to produce in-depth reviews on the 2 topics listed below.

Topic 1. Which incentive schemes and assessment reforms increase the uptake of Open Science?

The uptake of Open Science practices by the research community (including researchers, technicians, software engineers, data stewards, etc) is hindered by the lack of incentives and inappropriate research assessment criteria. The reform of these incentives and assessment criteria is gaining attention and is seen as necessary to drive broader adoption of Open Science. Several initiatives have emerged in recent years that promote incentive schemes favouring the uptake of Open Science practices (e.g. DORA, CoARA, narrative CVs, CRediT taxonomy, funder mandates, Open Science badges, etc).

Questions to address:

- What incentive schemes exist, and which show evidence of increasing — or failing to increase — the uptake of Open Science practices?
- Do incentive schemes promoting Open Science have unintended negative effects (e.g. gaming behaviours, superficial compliance, focus on measurable practices at the expense of theory or innovation)? Do they have unintended positive effects?
- What are the conditions for successful responsible research assessment implementation and what are the barriers?
  - → How do local implementation strategies interact with global policy frameworks?
  - → What are the barriers to implementation within institutions (resistance, lack of resources, disciplinary norms, etc.)?
  - → How can incentive schemes be adapted to low-resource settings or Global South contexts?

Topic 2. What factors influence the effectiveness of research data sharing policies?

Open Science policies on data-sharing frequently emphasise the FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) as a technical and procedural framework for improving data management and stewardship. However, the success of Open Science policies depends not only on technical compliance with FAIR principles but also on the broader research culture in which they are implemented.

This topic seeks to assess what the existing research tells us about the factors that influence the effectiveness of research data sharing policies, and how aspects of research culture (such as career stage, discipline, etc) shape that effectiveness.

When defining effectiveness, a clear distinction should be drawn between different outcome domains, including: intention to share data, actual data availability, quality of data, real data reuse, research

output from reuse of shared data, and impact of the reuse (disciplinary, practical, societal, pedagogical, etc.).

Questions to address:

- What are the stated aims of research data sharing policies (e.g. funder mandates, journal data sharing policies, institutional policies)?
- What evidence exists that research data sharing policies meet those aims?
- What evidence exists as to why these aims are not completely met?
  - → What are the unintended consequences — including perceived and actual risks — of (early) data sharing?
  - → What barriers prevent data sharing in disciplines with low data-sharing cultures? What incentivises data sharing in disciplines with high data-sharing cultures?
  - → What factors influence willingness to share data (e.g. discipline, career stage, access to resources, infrastructure, perceived risks of early data-sharing, etc)?

NB: GRIOS will fund one review per topic.

The total budget available for each topic is up to 80 000 EUR excluding taxes.

Scope and definitions

- **Definition of Open Science**

For the purposes of this call, GRIOS adopts the definition of Open Science set out in the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science[1]:

"…an inclusive construct that combines various movements and practices aiming to make multilingual scientific knowledge openly available, accessible and reusable for everyone, to increase scientific collaborations and sharing of information for the benefits of science and society, and to open the processes of scientific knowledge creation, evaluation and communication to societal actors beyond the traditional scientific community. It comprises all scientific disciplines and aspects of scholarly practices, including basic and applied sciences, natural and social sciences and the humanities, and it builds on the following key pillars: open scientific knowledge, Open Science infrastructures, science communication, open engagement of societal actors and open dialogue with other knowledge systems."

As defined by the UNESCO Recommendation, **Open Science practices** encompass the full research cycle and continually evolve. They include, among others, preprints, open peer review, open

[1] https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379949

infrastructure, sharing of null results, citizen science, open data sharing, open-source software and source code.

- **Scope of research topics**

The topics and questions outlined in the Objective section have been developed by GRIOS funders to reflect their policy priorities. They are indicative in nature and are not intended to constitute directly operational research questions without further interpretation and adaptation for evidence synthesis.

Applicants are expected to demonstrate a thorough understanding of these topics and to apply their expertise in meta-research to refine and translate them into methodologically robust questions suitable for evidence synthesis.

Applicants may address all or a subset of the questions listed under each topic and may propose additional research questions where this strengthens alignment with the study's objectives. All such decisions must be clearly justified in the proposal, with explicit consideration of their scientific and methodological rigour, as well as their relevance to policy.

- Applicants shall address their chosen research topic presented in the Objectives section above through a review of the existing **scholarly, policy and expert literature**.
- By "**review**," GRIOS refers to a **range of evidence synthesis methods**, selecting the approach that best fits the research question.
  - → **A systematic review** systematically identifies, collects, and critically analyses all relevant studies to answer a clearly defined question using transparent and reproducible methods. In addition, **meta-analyses** quantitatively pool study results to provide summary effect estimates, with an assessment of confidence where appropriate.
  - → **Scoping reviews** map the extent, range, and nature of evidence, clarify key concepts, and identify gaps, often without formally assessing study quality or risk of bias.
  - → **Other structured approaches** — such as rapid reviews or umbrella reviews — may also be used if justified, even when the methods or the scope differ from classical systematic reviews.
- Applicants shall choose the review type that they deem most suitable to obtain the best results.
- **Exhaustivity of the research and sources**: The review shall be as comprehensive as possible and appropriate to the chosen review type, including, if appropriate, peer-reviewed academic literature, preprints and grey literature. Any restrictions in types of sources used must be justified.
  - → Grey literature: GRIOS may decide to provide successful applicants with access to relevant subscription-based grey literature database(s) if needed to carry out the review.
- **Time period** of the data used in the study: the study should use as up to date information as possible.
- **Geographic scope**: GRIOS aims to be as global in reach as possible – any restrictions in geographic scope must be justified.
- **Use of open and proprietary data sources**: The study shall use all appropriate data sources, open or proprietary. In line with Open Science best practices, GRIOS requires the use of open data sources as a priority. The use of proprietary data sources is not excluded in the interest of the

comprehensiveness of the study, but their use rather than an open source must be duly justified in the application.

- **Languages**: GRIOS supports multilingualism and wishes to include literature in more than one language in the reviews. The review shall thus include literature in English and at least one other language. The proposal must justify the rationale for the choice of languages included, and any language restrictions, and describe how non-English studies will be identified, screened, and translated where necessary.
- The review itself shall be **submitted in English**.
- GRIOS acknowledges that the volume of relevant literature can be difficult to estimate prior to launching the reviews, and that available literature may in some cases be limited. Applicants are therefore asked to consider this uncertainty and to include, where appropriate, mitigation strategies — such as a possible reformulation of the research question after the initial collection of publications, should the literature prove insufficient for a meaningful review.

Methodological Requirements

Evidence synthesis methodology requirements

- Applicants shall propose the most suitable methodology to reach the desired result, using state-of-the-art systematic review and meta-analysis guidelines — including reporting guidelines (such as PRISMA and its extensions) and best practices (e.g. PRESS, JBI, Cochrane, etc.) as appropriate.
- All approaches must follow transparent, reproducible methods and clearly report the rationale for the chosen review type, grounded in methodological standards or guidelines.
- The proposed methods (e.g., search strategy, inclusion/exclusion criteria, screening process, data extraction, etc) must be described in the application.

Open Science requirements

- Applicants are in general required to follow Open Science practices, protocols and standards (preregistration, preprint posting, data sharing, code sharing, protocol sharing, PRESS guidelines, open access publication, etc). If it is not possible to follow some of these practices, it must be clearly justified in the proposal.
- See also the section on Open Access to the results of the work and intellectual property (in Rules and conditions).

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in conducting the work

- If AI tools (e.g. Claude, Mistral AI, ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot, DALL·E, DeepL, Consensus, Prism by Open AI, etc) are to be used in the conduct of the review, applicants must specify the approach and provide evidence of its validity, reliability, reproducibility, transparency and potential impact on bias. Applicants may wish to use resources about the best practice for the use of AI in evidence synthesis, such as: Responsible use of AI in evidence SynthEsis (RAISE): https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/FWAUD

- Any AI-based approach must be justified according to established best practices, with clear criteria demonstrating its validity.
- The review should document key interactions with AI tools (e.g., prompts or workflows), especially when they significantly influence the output.
- The review should Include a declaration about the use of AI tools in the final work, describing the tasks that they were used for, and a declaration acknowledging the authors' full responsibility for the content of the work, including the parts produced by AI tools. (See an example in the Application form.)

Note that GRIOS conducts state-of-the-art reviews and does not aim to develop new evidence synthesis tools.

2. Timeline

Call for applications opens	**23 April 2026**
Deadline for submission	20 July 2026, 16:00h CEST
Possibility to send clarifying questions about the call	20 May 2026, 16h00 CEST
Evaluation period	1 August - 30 September 2026
Communication of the evaluation's final results	October 2026
Signing the agreement with successful applicants	October-November 2026
Starting date of the projects	November- December 2026

3. Rules and conditions

Eligibility criteria

Only applicants meeting the following criteria will be considered as eligible:

- Applicants from all countries are eligible to respond to this call.
- The applicant is an individual researcher, a research team, a scientific/ research organisation, institute or a consortium of organisations, a research consultancy, for profit or non for profit, affiliated or not to a University, RPO, research centre, research-performing NGO or foundation.
- Applicants must be available to deliver the project within the indicated timescale and budget.
- Applicants must not present a conflict of interest with the aims or the process of the call. Ineligible applicants include, for example, commercial actors with a financial stake in influencing public research policies, or researchers with a close affiliation with members of GRIOS committees, etc.

Work Duration

Projects are expected to run for 12 months. A longer project duration may be proposed by the applicant but must be duly justified.

Expected deliverables

Successful applicants must deliver:

1. **A full review report containing:**

- The methods used, and the analytical code supporting the review, including, where applicable, documentation of key interactions with AI tools.
- The results of the study.
- The underlying data and metadata.
- Where applicable, a declaration of the use of AI tools during the work, listing the tasks for which AI was used and acknowledging the applicant's full responsibility for their work, including parts produced with AI assistance.

2. **Communication and dissemination deliverables:**

- A summary for policymakers or policy brief summarising the results and possible implications for policy-makers
- Visual materials communicating the main findings to a non-specialist audience (e.g. fact sheets, graphs, schemas)
- A communication and dissemination plan for the results of the work, incorporating public interventions, in order to ensure the impact of the work.

3. **GRIOS may additionally request interim presentations or progress reports** during the course of the project.

Open Access to the results of the work and Intellectual Property

- **Open access publishing**: By default, the results and materials developed during this work shall be made freely and openly available on the internet with an open license (CCBY or equivalent). Exceptions may be made for confidential internal reports prepared for the GRIOS governance.
- **Data sharing**: By default, the research data shall be openly licensed (CC0 or equivalent when possible) and appropriately documented to allow reuse following the open data practice making data "as open as possible, as closed as necessary". If data cannot be openly shared, this should be justified.

- The intellectual property of the report will be transferred to GRIOS. Notwithstanding, GRIOS will undertake to mention the name of the authors of the report.
- The methodology, know-how and infrastructure applied and/or developed by the author in carrying out the review will remain the property of the author, who is free to use, share, protect, publish, and freely exploit them.
- The author will be free to use the results of their work for any academic and research purposes.

Financial Support

- The **total budget available for each evidence synthesis topic is 80 000 EUR**, excluding taxes.
- The contract is awarded to the main applicant only. In the case of a consortium, the eventual distribution of funds to co-applicants is the responsibility of the main applicant.
- Payments are linked to completion of milestones and deliverables, not to actual cost evidence. There will be no financial reporting.
- Payments will be disbursed in several instalments depending on the project's duration, contingent upon meeting designated milestones and delivering specific outputs.
- The budget breakdown should take the form of a simple table providing a general overview of expenses, allocating a budget for personnel costs and other costs as applicable.
- All expenses in the budget must be expressed in Euros.

Language

English is the only official language for the GRIOS call. Submissions in any other language will be deemed ineligible and will not be evaluated.

Documents Format

Unless otherwise stated in specific questions of the Application form **(see Annex 1)**, any document requested in any of the phases must be submitted electronically in a non-password-protected **PDF format, without restrictions for printing or text processing, text search, etc. Scanned images are not accepted.**

Questions for clarification

Interested applicants may submit questions for clarification to npappleroy@esf.org until **20 May 2026** at **16h00 CEST.** These questions and answers will be publicly shared on the call's webpage.

Multiple submissions

Applicants may submit proposals for more than one topic in the GRIOS call, provided they can demonstrate the capacity to deliver all studies within the indicated timeframe. In this case a separate proposal must be submitted for each topic.

Ethical Issues

GRIOS/ ESF strictly adheres to the fundamental ethical principles outlined in the "European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity.". To ensure compliance, all applicants are required to acknowledge and accept our privacy policy and declaration of honour (ethics) during the submission process. This acknowledgment confirms that, by submitting the form, they accept the terms described in the provided text. No additional documents need to be uploaded; applicants are solely required to read and agree to the terms outlined when submitting the form. Applications that fail to adequately address ethical concerns or privacy aspects will be rejected.

Guidance on the use of generative artificial intelligence tools for the preparation of the proposal

When considering the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools for the preparation of the proposal, it is imperative to exercise caution and careful consideration.

The AI-generated content should be thoroughly reviewed and validated by the applicants to ensure its appropriateness and accuracy, as well as its compliance with intellectual property regulations. Applicants are fully responsible for the content of the proposal (even those parts produced by the AI tool) and must be transparent in disclosing which AI tools were used and how they were utilised. Specifically, applicants are required to:

- Verify the accuracy, validity, and appropriateness of the content and any citations generated by the AI tool and correct any errors or inconsistencies.
- Provide a list of sources used to generate content and citations, including those generated by the AI tool. Double-check citations to ensure they are accurate and properly referenced.
- Be conscious of the potential for plagiarism where the AI tool may have reproduced substantial text from other sources. Check the original sources to be sure you are not plagiarizing someone else's work.
- Acknowledge the limitations of the AI tool in the proposal preparation, including the potential for bias, errors, and gaps in knowledge.

Data Protection

GRIOS/ ESF requires access to Personal and Entity Data to process and evaluate applications. As open call coordinator, ESF /GRIOS Secretariat will act as the Data Controller for all data submitted through the SmartSimple platform for this purpose. To ensure the safety and security of this data, the SmartSimple platform has been designed and operates under strict compliance with The General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR).

Therefore, all applicants are required to accept the SmartSimple Platform terms to ensure full coverage. For more information regarding the data privacy policy and security measures implemented by SmartSimple, please refer to their website: https://www.smartsimple.com/trust-security-platform-privacy-policy.

Data Sharing: Application data will be forwarded to evaluators for evaluation as appropriate.

4. Proposal submission process

The submission will be done through SmartSimple, the official online submission platform of ESF.

- If you are a new user, please use this link : https://esf.smartsimple.ie/s_signup.jsp?token=XVtQC1oGYV5ZSxtZXxJXR1JWYUl1H3Rt
- If you already have a profile on SmartSimple you can connect using your regular log in details on https://esf.smartsimple.ie

Only applications received directly through this platform will be considered eligible. Explanations on how to submit an application via SmartSimple are available in Annex 2.

An editable template of the application form is available in Annex 1 to allow offline preparation. Sending this form template in any other format and via e-mail or any other means will not be eligible.

The application reception will close on **20 July 2026, 16:00 CEST.**

Application preparation

Applicants are strongly advised to follow these steps before submitting:

- Check the guidelines for applicants to determine if you are eligible for the call.
- Apply only via the official submission platform, using the provided templates for the required documents.
- Ensure all questions are answered and all required documents are included. Incomplete submissions or documents in an incorrect format will negatively affect eligibility for evaluation.
- Be concrete and concise. Open-ended questions have character limitations.
- Submit before the deadline. Only the submission within the Open Call duration will be accepted. There will not be any deadline extensions unless there is a Force Majeure situation (i.e., a major problem with the platform caused by ESF and not by the applicants, making the system unavailable for a long period).
- Do not to wait until the last minute to submit your application, in order to anticipate any technical issues that may occur.

Error in a submitted application

If the applicant discovers an error in a submitted application or aims to improve the application, a new version may be submitted, provided the call deadline has not passed. For this purpose, the applicant must contact the helpdesk at esf-panels@esf.org to request that the application be reopened.

Please be aware that once opened, the applicant should send the form again before the set deadline. Failure to resubmit will result in the proposal not being evaluated.

Resubmission requests will be answered up to two hours before the deadline. The helpdesk cannot guarantee a timely response during the last two hours of the call.

5. Proposal Evaluation and Selection Process

The application reception will close on **20 July 2026, 16:00 CEST**

A list of applicants will be compiled, containing basic information for statistical purposes.

Eligibility check

Following closure of the call, all submitted proposals will undergo an automatic eligibility check verifying:

- The existence of an eligible applicant (check the Eligibility criteria in the relevant section above)
- That all required fields in the online application form are completed and all required documents have been uploaded correctly.

Applicants whose proposals are marked as non-eligible will receive a rejection email stating the reasons for ineligibility at the end of the evaluation process. No further feedback on the process will be given.

Evaluation criteria

The applications that pass the eligibility check will proceed to evaluation by a GRIOS-appointed evaluation board. Each proposal will be reviewed and scored against the following evaluation criteria:

Criterion	Explanation	Weight
Scope and conceptual framework	The proposal demonstrates good understanding of the chosen topic and research question(s) and provides clear and justified scope and objectives.	10%
Soundness of the methodology proposed	The methodology proposed is sound, appropriate, feasible, as comprehensive as possible and appropriate to the review type. Open Science protocols and practices are embedded as much as possible, as appropriate and reasonable, without significantly reducing the feasibility and exhaustivity of the review.	35%
Feasibility of the workplan	The workplan sets out a clear and realistic timeline, milestones, and resource allocation. Risks are well identified and mitigation actions proposed.	15%
Communication and dissemination plan	The communication and dissemination plan allows to translate the findings into accessible messages and provides ways for the results to reach a non-specialist audience, including funders and policymakers.	10%

Relevant expertise and knowledge of the team members carrying out the review	The team members demonstrate the experience and knowledge necessary to carry out the review. Collaborations between teams with complementary expertise and global reach are encouraged where justified, as is the ability to translate the study findings into policy insights. The team's composition aims to be equitable and diverse.	20%
Sound budget and Value for money	The budget proposed is realistic, within the agreed level and offers value for money (VfM). VfM is calculated (rather than evaluated) as the most competitive (lowest) proposed budget/budget being evaluated x weighting %. Example: • Research team A: proposed budget (PB): 50 000 EUR • Research Team B: proposed budget: 80 000EUR • Research team C: proposed budget: 100 000 EUR The most competitive price (MCP) is 50 000 EUR. If the weighting is 10%, then: VfM=MCP/PB*10 • The VfM for research team A is 50000/50000*10=10 • The VfM for research team B is 50000/80000*10=6,25 • The VfM for research team C is 50000/10000*10= 5	10%

Table 1: Evaluation criteria

The evaluators will sign a declaration of confidentiality concerning the contents of the proposals they read. The form which they use in the evaluation carries a declaration of freedom from conflict of interest which they agree to by signing them. All evaluators will receive the evaluation guidelines, templates, and will be duly informed about the timing of the process and conflict of interest issues.

The evaluators will score each award criterion on a scale from 0 to 5:

Score	Definition
0	The proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.
1	Poor – the criterion is inadequately addressed or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
2	Fair – the proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.
3	Good – the proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.
4	Very good - the proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.
5	Excellent - The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

Table 2. Score definition

The total score will be calculated as a weighted average of the score across all criteria.

The evaluators will produce a ranked list that will be submitted to the GRIOS Steering Committee for decision **about the proposal to be selected and funded.**

GRIOS may request clarification or additional information from applicants during this process.

Announcement of results

Once the ranked applicants list is validated, all applicants will be informed about the outcome of the evaluation process: non-eligible, under threshold, approved but not selected, selected, and waiting list.

Each applicant will receive an email confirming the decision and, where applicable, the following steps, along with an Evaluation Summary Report (ESR).

Anonymised statistical data about the proposals received may be published on the GRIOS website.

6. Contact information

For questions about GRIOS and the call, please contact npappleroy@esf.org.

For technical questions concerning the SmartSimple submission platform, please contact: esf-panels@esf.org

Requests will receive a response within 2 working days. While all possible effort will be made to respond in a timely manner, the teams should plan their submissions allowing enough time before the deadline (i.e., at least 2 working days prior) if they expect an answer. Lack of the receipt of an answer to an enquiry shall not constitute grounds for extension or re-evaluation of a submission. Please note that any email received outside the designated support channel will not be taken into account.

7. Annexes

Annex 1: Editable template of the application form

Annex 2: Submission instructions for applicants