

# Call for early career researcher working groups (ECR)

Final funding approval for 2025 and beyond cannot be 100% guaranteed yet and is subject to the final approval of iDiv funding, which is planned before the project of this call will start.

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## List of relevant documents & links:

- [sDiv call website including necessary documents for proposal submission](#)
- [The general mission and ideas behind iDiv and sDiv](#)
- [the five research areas of iDiv's biodiversity research](#)
- [iDiv's research mission in the field of integrative biodiversity research](#)
- [iDiv application portal](#)
- [sDiv budget tool](#)
- [List of iDiv members](#)
- [List research-wise under-represented regions](#)
- [iDiv data and code sharing policy](#)

## 1 General information and rules

This call is for synthesis working groups of eight to ten people, led and driven by early career researchers, starting in January 2025. The call aims to allow early-stage scientists to conduct synthesis projects in a stimulating and supportive international environment.

Applications are open to all early career scientists worldwide. sDiv, like iDiv, is committed to establishing and maintaining a diverse and inclusive community that collectively supports and implements our mission to do great science. We will welcome, recruit, develop, and advance talented staff from diverse genders and backgrounds. **We encourage proposals that engage genuinely with topics and researchers from under-represented regions (see list [here](#)).** This could come in various ways that are important for regional biodiversity research as well as building synthesis connections beyond those regions. **If you plan to work with researchers from and questions relevant for under-represented regions, proposals should co-design and collaborate with researchers in under-represented regions, recognizing differences in scientific culture, interests and needs** (more information [here](#)).

Two or three in-person meetings will take place in Leipzig. If hybrid or full in-person meetings cannot take place, sDiv working groups should try to meet virtually with full support by sDiv.

Each sDiv working group should have at least one [iDiv member](#) (full & associated members are eligible) as a participant. **Please note: iDiv member is a pre-defined term and is not referring to every iDiv researcher (e.g. iDiv employee).** iDiv members are researchers

from iDiv or collaborating institutes who have to apply for being iDiv members. It is a specific status.

Please read thoroughly about the [general mission and ideas behind iDiv and the sDiv synthesis centre](#) as they are important and helpful in preparing a successful sDiv proposal.

Besides **data synthesis** we also advocate for **theory and conceptual synthesis** of all topics related to biodiversity research. We encourage applicants to propose **forward looking theory and synthesis topics and perspectives, which can pave the way for novel research themes, going beyond backward looking perspectives.**

As a topical focus we also encourage projects to use synthesis research efforts, theory and methods to close or work on closing **knowledge gaps identified by IPBES** (see [here](#) for a full list). Although tackling some of these important knowledge gaps might require full time staff the only support staff sDiv can fund in this call are student helpers, being placed at iDiv in Leipzig (see Appendix I for more information).

## 2 Early Career Researcher working groups

### 2.1 Working group composition

The working groups should be small collaborative teams of early career researchers (ECR). ECRs are defined as PhD students or postdocs who completed their PhD no more than six years ago, counted with this call deadline. This limit may be extended by maternity/paternity leave. Further, one year per child can be added to the six year period. Any other relevant non-full research periods to be considered as an extension should be well explained.

The group's PIs must be ECRs as well. In addition, if the PIs have not completed their PhD yet, at least one of them must have submitted the PhD thesis.

The size of the working group is limited to eight scientists, including max. two senior researchers. The career status of each participant has to be clarified in the proposal. The senior researchers are meant to contribute with their expertise but should not lead or dominate the team. Also, they must not be the supervisors of any early career researchers involved. If the project is funded, we offer the opportunity to include two additional iDiv researchers if suitable and reasonable.

ECR projects should aim to have at least 40% female participation. In order to foster new collaborations and networks, at least 50% of the working group participants should not have collaborated before. To balance the carbon footprint and necessary geographic representation, the PIs are asked to choose the participants meaningfully. **Please note again the focus on under-represented regions (see list [here](#)), which should be also visible in the group composition** (if applicable). For this call targeting those regions, a maximum of five of the eight participants can be from outside of geographical Europe (if well justified).

## 2.2 Collaboration in iDiv

At least one of the participants has to be an [iDiv member](#) (full or associate) and this person may thus have to be one of the senior researchers. **Please note: iDiv member is a pre-defined term and is not referring to every iDiv researcher (e.g. iDiv employee) in your project team.** Generally we want the iDiv researchers to be involved in the same way as anyone else in the project. It should not lead to picking names because you have to, but it should really lead to a meaningful and for the project helpful integration and collaboration. Choose the iDiv researcher wisely according to their expertise. We encourage you to include [PhD students of iDiv's graduate school yDiv](#) if the scientific focus fits to the student expertise (for help with finding the right yDiv student, please contact the Head of sDiv).

Contact sDiv head [Marten Winter](#) in finding a suitable iDiv member and/or the head of yDiv [Nicole Schmerda-Schulz](#) for finding suitable yDiv PhD students.

## 3 Application process

### 3.1 Pre-proposal

You are only eligible to submit a full sDiv proposal if you have been invited to do so after a successfully reviewed pre-proposal. The mandatory pre-proposal should briefly describe the project and the aims. Pre-proposals have to be submitted via an online form in the [iDiv application portal](#) before **12 March 2024 (11:59 PM CET)**. Decisions whether you can submit a full proposal will be made at the end of March 2024 and the feedback will be sent to you a few days after that.

The pre-proposal online form includes:

1. Information and status of the PIs and participants, including the supporting iDiv member (early career or senior researcher).
2. A brief description of the planned project (no more than 750 words excluding references, usage of references is optional, no charts, no graphics, no calculations, no formatting but continuous text) including the novelty, the synthesis aspect and scientific aims, approaches (methods, used data etc.) and relevance for biodiversity.
3. A brief description how your project engages genuinely with topics and researchers from under-represented regions (if applicable).
4. A list of data to be used - Clarify the source and availability status (e.g. available, to be mobilized, etc.) of the data you plan to use, if applicable. If data is not available, explain why.

5. A letter of support by the iDiv member(s) using the template provided on the [sDiv website](#) - a pre-proposal without a letter of support from an iDiv member will not be further evaluated.
6. A list of min. five potential reviewers for the full proposal in case of a successful pre-proposal.
7. The IPBES knowledge gap which the project is going to address (if applicable) including a short description

### 3.2 Full proposal

Following the invitation to submit a full proposal, it is necessary to complete the **proposal template** provided on the [sDiv website](#) - available after the pre-proposal deadline. Submit your full proposal including all attachments in **one PDF file** via the online form in the [iDiv application portal](#) by **14 June 2024 (11:59 PM CET)**. **Check all regulations and the online form well before the submission deadline** - it contains a number of questions to be filled out in order to ease processing of the application data. Final funding decisions will be made at the end of August 2024 and the feedback will be sent to you a few days after that.

## 4 Research data management

It is required that the data owners agree to make the data and code resulting from sDiv funding publicly available. This should be achieved within three years of the final working group meeting, and under the least restrictive license possible.

Therefore, PIs that get a positive funding decision have to read and sign the [iDiv Data and Code Sharing Policy](#) (and send it back to the head of sDiv). iDiv's data policy follows widely accepted Open Science principles. Funded projects will receive intensive support in any necessary code and data management demands by iDiv's Integrative Biodiversity Data and Code Support Unit.

## 5 Budget

The budget for one working group meeting is generally limited to ~10.000,00 €. Working groups should meet two or three times over a period of two to three years (max. sum ~30.000,00 €). The third meeting is subject to a project evaluation by the sDiv board after the second meeting. The financial support shown in the approved budget includes care of all local arrangements (local transportation, per diem expenses etc.) and reimbursement for travel and lodging. Administration of the budget is handled by the sDiv staff. For virtual meetings, please check our [virtual meeting guideline](#) to see which specific services sDiv offers.

Budget calculation has to be done via the [budget tool](#) provided on the sDiv website. It is important to add a screenshot of the budget tool to the full proposal.

**Any financial deviations from the proposed budget of funded proposals must be discussed with the head of sDiv. Due to the uncertain and rapidly changing general financial situation, mainly in travel costs, potential increased costs compared to the proposal can be handled flexibly if well-justified. Please note that we cannot save money in one year and shift it to other years!**

Please note that funding is subject to a successful approval of iDiv funding beyond the DFG funding.

## 6 Evaluation procedure

### 6.1 Selection criteria

Generally, selection criteria are based on scientific excellence, the relevance and novelty of the research questions, a strategic fit to iDiv research (please read carefully the [sDiv framework](#)), work plan (timeline, deliverables etc.), expertise and suitability of the working group participants and the PIs. The project's objectives have to be highly relevant to iDiv's central missions.

### 6.2 Proposal evaluation

Pre-proposals will be evaluated at the end of March 2024 by the sDiv board. The feedback will be sent to you a few days after that.

Full proposals are evaluated at the end of August 2024 by the sDiv board and external expert reviewers. The feedback will be sent to you a few days after that.

## 7 Reporting

The PIs of funded working groups are obliged to provide a summary of every meeting immediately afterwards. Furthermore, it is expected that a final report will be delivered six months after the last meeting. All reports will be published on the individual [sDiv project webpages](#).

The report should include specific project deliverables: i.e. manuscripts of multi-author scientific publications, proposals for other funding sources, code, databases etc. It should also include a description of further collaboration plans. **sDiv support has to be acknowledged**

**in any kind of sDiv project publication/outcome ([see guidelines](#)). Copies of published products should be sent to sDiv.**

As an important part of the improvement of sDiv and the development of synthesis centers, working groups are evaluated before, during and after the meetings. Every working group participant is asked to answer the evaluation survey(s) after the meeting(s).

Failure to follow the sDiv rules & regulations for unjustified reasons and non-compliance with [iDiv's data policy](#) can result in banning PIs from submitting future proposals to project calls.