

Upscaling Citizen Science

Call for Proposals

Area of Action: Healthy Soils and Waters

1 Introduction

Why scale up a citizen science project at BOKU?

As part of the BOKU project "Unsere Mission: Gesunde Böden und Gewässer" ("Our Mission: Healthy Soils and Waters"), a BOKU citizen science project related to the EU Missions "A Soil Deal for Europe" and/or "Restore our Ocean and Waters" is being funded. The goal is to expand an existing small-scale citizen science project from the local to the regional level, OR to open a conventional project to the public.

Background of the project „Unsere Mission: Gesunde Böden und Gewässer“:

The project "Unsere Mission: Gesunde Böden und Gewässer" outlines ways in which BOKU can work with society to find transformative solutions for the sustainable use, protection, and revitalization of soils and water bodies. To this end, BOKU's extensive expertise in the areas of soil and waters is integrated internally to facilitate dialogue with society and is made visible, thereby positioning the university externally as a leading beacon of transformation on a national scale.

By scaling up a citizen science project, a larger segment of the public can be introduced to the goals of the EU's Mission Soil and Mission Water and get actively involved in the research process.

What is citizen science

In very simplified terms, in citizen science, scientific projects are carried out with the assistance or completely by interested amateurs [lat. amator "lover"]. The citizen scientists formulate research questions, report observations, carry out measurements, analyse data and/or write publications. Compliance with scientific standards is a prerequisite. Projects are carried out in all areas of research, from the natural sciences, humanities and social sciences to the arts and cultural studies. This not only makes new scientific projects and new findings possible, but also enables a dialogue between science and society that is otherwise impossible or very difficult. (from <https://www.citizen-science.at/en/immerse/what-is-citizen-science>)

Key points:

Area of action	Mission Soil &/ Mission Water
Funding	€ 60.000
Amount of funded projects	1 Project
Funding rate	100 %
Submission period	April 27, 2026 to June 18, 2026
Announcement of funded project	August 01, 2026
Deadline for final report	February 28, 2028
Submission platform	Via e-mail to hanna.rummel@boku.ac.at
Contact	Hanna Rummel (hanna.rummel@boku.ac.at)

2 Thematic Focus

The upscaling initiative is aimed at already running BOKU projects that focus on the areas of action of the EU Mission Soil and/or Water.

EU Horizon Missions

The EU Missions are large-scale initiatives under Horizon Europe that set clear, time-bound goals to drive targeted efforts to tackle some of our biggest challenges, such as climate change, cancer, ocean restoration, soil health, and the development of climate-neutral and smart cities. By bringing together researchers, policymakers, citizens, and stakeholders, the EU missions pool the necessary resources to drive innovation and deliver concrete solutions for the benefit of society.

Mission Soil

The EU Mission “A Soil Deal for Europe” (or “Mission Soil” for short) aims to establish 100 living labs and lighthouses across the EU by 2030 to improve soil health. In addition to this overarching goal, more specific targets have been set regarding soil sealing, organic carbon, soil contamination, and other aspects. The Austrian national implementation of Mission Soil focuses on the following six thematic areas:

- Quality-assured knowledge transfer regarding soil expertise
- Promotion of soil research in science, technology, and innovation, as well as in the sectoral sphere
- Consolidation of existing measures and development of a sustainable platform
- Reduction of land consumption and soil sealing
- Preservation and improvement of soil quality
- Development of a soil monitoring system to provide the basis for evidence-based policymaking

Mission Water

The EU Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters” (or “Mission Water” for short) aims to restore the oceans and inland waters to good condition by 2030. This overarching objective is broken down into three specific goals:

1. to protect and restore marine and freshwater ecosystems and their biodiversity,
2. to eliminate or prevent pollution of our oceans and water bodies and restore habitats,
3. to make the “blue economy” sustainable, climate-neutral, and circular.

The program’s focus areas cover the most important fields of action in the areas of water, aquatic environment, and biodiversity conservation; the restoration of natural habitats; and the sustainable use of water as a key resource. The focus areas are

- Integrated river basin management and ecological status
- Wetland conservation and restoration
- Expanding knowledge of aquatic biodiversity
- Securing necessary water resources
- Water quality
- Sustainable use of water as a source of renewable energy

For more information on austrian national implementation and the action plans for each mission, please visit the Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG) website:

- *Mission Soil:* <https://www.ffg.at/en/europa/heu/missions/nationale-umsetzung/boden>
- *Mission Water:* <https://www.ffg.at/europa/heu/missions/nationale-umsetzung/wasser>

3 Funding Goal

The goals of upscaling a citizen science project at BOKU are:

- To open up a Mission Soil &/ Water project to public participation (citizen science project) OR to upscale a local Mission Soil &/ Water project at BOKU already using the citizen science approach for regional implementation
- Mutual knowledge transfer between science and society on the topics of healthy soils and water bodies

4 Requirements

Fundable project:

- The project must be a running BOKU project (BOKU is coordinating the project or is a partner in a project).
- The project must be related to either or both the Mission Soil & Mission Water.
- If it is an ongoing citizen science project, it must be a small, local project.
- The project must be conducted in Austria.
- The funded project must meet the quality criteria for citizen science projects on Österreich forscht (Version 1.2, <https://zenodo.org/records/14845396>).

Non-fundable projects:

- Projects with project leaders who are part of the BOKU project team "Unsere Mission: Gesunde Böden & Gewässer", as well as individuals who are directly employed or supervised by project team members .
- Projects that do not meet the quality criteria for citizen science projects on Österreich forscht (Version 1.2, <https://zenodo.org/records/14845396>).

Other:

- A project application that has been fully completed and signed by the applicant consortium is a prerequisite for the application to be considered in the evaluation process.

Failure to meet one or more of these requirements may result in the project application being rejected during the formal review and thus before the substantive evaluation.

5 Procedure

5.1 Submission

This call for proposals is a time-limited opportunity during which funding applications may be submitted. Applications may be submitted via email to hanna.rummel@boku.ac.at from April 27, 2026, through June 18, 2026 (12:00 p.m.). The components of the proposal are stated in 6. Components of the Proposal.

5.2 Ex-Ante Evaluation

Evaluation process and project selection

All applications submitted by the deadline are first reviewed to ensure they meet the formal criteria.

A jury of independent international experts assess the applications based on the defined evaluation criteria. All experts are not associated with BOKU University. Each application is evaluated by three different jury members.

Funding decision

Following the evaluation process, the jury collectively decides which project receives the funding in a final jury meeting.

5.3 Funding Period

Project start & end

Following the jury's decision, the selected project will be announced on August 1, 2026. The project may begin at that time. The final report (including financial statements) must be submitted by February 28, 2028. The project may be carried out during this period.

If the project starts immediately and the final report is to be completed within two months, the project timeline could look something like this:

What?	When?
Announcement of funded project	August 01, 2026
Start of project	August 01, 2026
End of project	December 31, 2027
Processing of final report (incl cost breakdown)	January 30, 2028
Deadline of final report	February 28, 2028
Project period:	16 Months

Flow rates

The grant of 60,000 EUR will be paid out in two instalments. Once the funded project has been announced, 50% (30,000 EUR) will be paid out. After the final report has been successfully reviewed, another 50% (30,000 EUR) will be paid out.

If the final report fails the review by the responsible persons of the call or is submitted late, the second grant instalment will not be paid out

5.4 Final Report und Ex-Poste-Evaluation

Final report

The final report must be submitted along with the financial statement (Cost breakdown), SAP, and the Timesheet by February 28, 2028, at the latest. If the final report fails the review or is submitted late, the second grant installment will not be paid out. Relevant templates will be made available on the project website (<https://boku.ac.at/missionsoilwater>) well in advance.

Documents to be submitted:

- Final report
- Cost breakdown
- SAP
- Timesheet (ArgeData)

Ex-Post-Evaluation

The ex-post evaluation of the final report assesses whether the project objectives have been achieved and is carried out by the persons responsible of the call. If the project objectives have not been achieved without a valid reason or have been achieved only partially without a valid reason, the second funding installment will not be disbursed.

Completion

The second grant installment will be paid out upon timely submission and successful review of the final report. The grant is considered completed upon the final payment.

5.5 Upscaling Timeline

What?	When?
Submission period	April 27, 2026 to June 18, 2026
Evaluation period	June 20, 2026 to July 31, 2026
Announcement of funded project	August 01, 2026
Deadline for final report	February 28, 2028

6 Components of the Proposal

An application must include at least the **Proposal Form** and the **Cost Breakdown**. If the person submitting the application is not the project manager of the submitted project, an additional **Letter Of Support** from the project manager must be included.

It is mandatory to use the provided templates for the Proposal form and the Cost breakdown. These can be found on the project website (<https://boku.ac.at/missionsoilwater>).

- Proposal form ("Upscaling_ProposalForm_Projectname")
- Cost breakdown ("Upscaling_CostBreakdown_Projectname")
- Letter Of Support

7 Evaluation Criteria

7.1 Formal Criteria

Applications submitted for the expert review must meet the following formal criteria to be eligible for the expert review.

- The provided **form templates** must be used for the Proposal Form and the Cost Breakdown (see 6.).
- All required documents must be completed in **full**.
- All required documents must be completed in **English**.
- The Cost Breakdown and the Letter Of Support (if needed) must be submitted as **PDF**. The Proposal Form must be submitted as **PDF and Word** file.
- All required documents must be **submitted together**.
- All required documents must be submitted **by the deadline** (by May 31, 2026 12:00 p.m.).
- The submitted project must meet the financial requirements (see 9.).

7.2 Expert opinion

The evaluation is conducted by an external, independent jury using a point system. Each application is evaluated by three different jury members. The assessment is based on five main criteria (C1–C5), each of which consists of several sub-questions. The evaluation is recorded directly in the same document as the application form.

The main criteria are as follows:

- **Quality Criteria Citizen Science: Exclusion criteria [C1]**
- **Quality Criteria Citizen Science: Open questions regarding the project [C2]**
- **Impact on the EU-Missions [C3]**
- **Upscaling Citizen Science [C4a]** (If the project is an existing small citizen science project)
- **Opening for Citizen Science [C4b]** (When a conventional project is opened up to citizen science)
- **Implementation [C5]**

Additional information on some of the quality criteria for citizen science can be found in an extra document named “Additional Info_Quality Criteria Citizen Science”, which is available on the project website (<https://boku.ac.at/missionsoilwater>). As this information is intended to help you understand the questions in the proposal, it is **mandatory to read** it.

8 Financial Requirements

8.1 Type of funding

The funding is a grant. The funding rate is up to 100% of eligible costs.

8.2 Duration

The funded project must be completed before the final report is submitted on February 28, 2028. A cost-neutral project extension is not possible.

8.3 Funding amount

The funding amount is € 60.000.

8.4 Fundable costs

In accordance with the principles of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness, expenses are eligible for funding only to the extent that their nature and amount are necessary and appropriate for achieving the purpose of the grant. Inappropriate cost estimates may constitute grounds for rejection, even if the content of the grant application is excellent.

The following categories of costs are eligible for funding, provided they are relevant to the project:

Personnel costs for scientific/technical staff:

- Eligible personnel costs are calculated based on planned or actual gross personnel costs plus a flat-rate allowance for non-wage labor costs (LNK) of 25%
- The maximum eligible personnel costs per person are capped at the maximum contribution base set annually by the responsible federal ministry. (Example: Maximum contribution basis for 2025 = €6,450/month; maximum eligible personnel costs per person = €6,450 × 14 = €90,300 (excluding LNK)) More information can be conducted from the cost breakdown sheet

Material costs and other expenses:

- Experimental / Consumable Materials
- Costs for open-access publications related to the project
- Event costs and participation fees
- Travel expenses
- License fees

Third-party services:

- In accordance with the arm's-length-principle:
- Max. 10% of total eligible costs
- Third-party service providers may perform distinct and predefined services; however, they may not assume central roles in the project (such as leading a work package or similar).
- Third-party service providers may not assert any intellectual property rights (IPR) over the project results.
- Project sponsors, cooperation partners, and their affiliated institutions may not provide third-party services within the project.

Overhead costs

Overhead costs are eligible for funding exclusively as a flat rate of 25% of eligible personnel costs, material costs, and other direct costs (but not for internal cost allocations or third-party services). This means, for example, that the following cost categories are covered on a flat-rate basis:

- Rent and operating costs
- Office supplies
- Administrative personnel costs

8.5 Non-fundable costs

- Costs incurred outside the project period
- Invoices not issued to the grant recipients
- Payments not made by the grant recipients
- Cash discounts and rebates
- Value-added tax (VAT), provided the grant recipients are eligible for input tax deduction
- (Partial) amounts from payments for which subsequent credits were granted or offset
- Costs for the acquisition of land
- Financing costs
- Cash payments exceeding €5,000.00
- Depreciation (AfA)
- Investments and acquisition costs (exceeding the threshold for low-value assets)

8.6 Cost Statement

The proper use of the grant must be documented and submitted. For this purpose, please enclose an SAP-excerpt with the final report. As part of the reporting process, these expense reports will be reviewed.

9 Obligations of Grant Recipients

Grant recipients are required to comply with the following:

- Economical, prudent, appropriate, and transparent use of funds.
- Maintaining separate and comprehensive records to document the implementation of the funded project, as well as retaining the records and supporting documents during the project and for at least ten years after its completion, unless there are additional legal requirements.
- Maintenance of an adequate accounting system.
- Submission of the final report, cost breakdown, SAP, and timesheet by February 28, 2028
- Timely reporting of all significant events relevant to the implementation of the funded project.
- Ensuring the visibility of the BOKU University project "Unsere Mission: Gesunde Böden und Gewässer" as the funding provider on websites, in publications, and at events related to the funded activity.
- Registration and use of the Österreich forscht-blog. Regular updates on the project's progress are required.
- Compliance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN).

10 Suspension and recovery of funding

Unduly received funding must be repaid or will be reversed.

11 Data protection

The general data protection regulations apply. These are, in each case in their applicable version:

- a. Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data, on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (Datenschutz-Grundverordnung, short DSGVO),
- b. Federal Act on the Protection of Natural Persons with regard to the Processing of Personal Data (Datenschutzgesetz, kurz DSG)

You can access these provisions at <http://www.eur-lex.europa.eu> (DSVGO) and <https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/> (DSG).

In addition, all relevant documents (guidelines, policies, etc.) of the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna, available on the intranet, must be observed.

12 Legal basis

This call is issued pursuant to the BOKU University Leistungsvereinbarung 2025-2027, B4.2, number 3. The submission, evaluation, funding and reporting procedures are governed by the following binding documents:

Upscaling_CALL FOR PROPOSALS, Proposal Form, Cost Breakdown, Letter Of Support, Final Report, SAP, Timesheet

13 People in charge of call

This call for proposals resulted from the project “Unsere Mission: Gesunde Böden und Gewässer” (see 1 Introduction), with the following people in charge:

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