

Open Call for Constructive Advanced Thinking (CAT) Programme 2027 - 2029

Deadline for applications: 13 September 2026, 23:59 CET

CAT supports small, interdisciplinary teams of early-career researchers to develop innovative and interdisciplinary ideas through short, funded stays at leading Institutes for Advanced Study across Europe.

What is CAT?

The Constructive Advanced Thinking (CAT) programme supports small, interdisciplinary teams of early-career researchers to develop innovative ideas through a series of short, funded stays at Institutes for Advanced Study (IASs) across Europe.

CAT is not a traditional research grant but a collaborative format designed to foster exchange, experimentation, and the development of new approaches in a highly interactive and interdisciplinary setting.

The initiative was developed within the Network of European Institutes for Advanced Study (NetIAS) and involves institutes both within and beyond the network, providing access to a wide range of research environments and intellectual communities across Europe.

Aim of the Programme

The programme aims to support the development of innovative ideas for understanding and addressing current and emerging societal challenges. It combines a strong focus on societal relevance with a bottom-up, non-thematic approach.

Selected groups meet regularly over a period of up to three years for short stays at different participating IASs. These stays provide time and space for focused discussion, as well as opportunities to engage with fellows and local research communities, creating a stimulating environment for interdisciplinary exchange and critical reflection.

CAT encourages collaboration across disciplines, institutions, and countries, and supports engagement beyond academia. Teams may include or collaborate with stakeholders such as policymakers, industry representatives, or civil society actors where relevant.

The programme is designed to support the development of new research directions and collaborations, and may also provide a foundation for future joint projects, including the preparation of external funding applications.

With few formal constraints and a light application process, CAT is designed to give early-career researchers the time, space, and flexibility to develop their ideas, rather than navigating administrative burdens.

Support

CAT provides early-career research teams with time and space for focused discussion and collaboration in a range of leading research environments across Europe.

Over a period of up to three years, selected teams will meet regularly for short stays at participating Institutes for Advanced Study (IASs). These stays typically last between one and two weeks and take place two to three times per year, for a maximum of six stays. Online meetings or digital stays may complement the overall work plan where appropriate.

CAT covers travel and accommodation costs for these meetings. The programme does not provide funding for salaries or research-related expenses.

Hosting institutes support the teams by connecting them with fellows and local research communities, providing opportunities for exchange, feedback, and interdisciplinary engagement. During their stays, CAT teams will benefit from the institutes' intellectual environment and collegial atmosphere, which support both focused work and informal exchange. Discussions at the institutes provide a valuable sounding board for developing and refining ideas.

The exact format and scheduling of stays will be agreed in coordination with the hosting institutes.

Obligations for CAT groups

CAT is a collaborative format that relies on the active engagement of participating teams throughout the duration of the project.

Selected groups are expected to remain in regular contact with the programme coordinator, in particular to support coordination between stays at the different hosting institutes.

At mid-term, the continuation of the programme is subject to the submission and evaluation of a brief progress report (approx. one page), outlining the development of the project.

During their stays, groups are expected to engage with the hosting institutes and their communities. This may include presenting their work, participating in institute activities, and contributing to discussions where appropriate. The exact format and level of engagement will be agreed with each hosting institute.

CAT teams are also encouraged to document their work and development throughout the programme, for example through visual and written material, which may be used for communication and dissemination purposes.

At the end of the project, CAT teams are expected to submit a final updated report and complete a short questionnaire.

In keeping with the policies of the participating institutes, researchers retain the intellectual property rights to their work.

Eligibility criteria

- The project must address emergent societal issues.
- Teams must consist of three to five members (including any stakeholder representatives) and must be fully constituted at the time of application.
- The Principal Investigator (team leader) must:
 - have a stable research position at a European (EU as well as UK and [associated countries](#)) higher education or research institution for the entire duration of the project
 - have obtained their PhD between January 2017 and September 2026
- No team member should have obtained their PhD before January 2017.
- Doctoral researchers may also participate.

- Each team must include participants from at least two different countries (based on current institutional affiliation; participants may be of any nationality)
- The team may include member(s) affiliated with a higher education or research institution outside the EU, UK, and [associated countries](#). If applicable, applicants are asked to briefly outline the role of these team member(s) and how their participation contributes to the proposed project.
- The eligibility can be extended beyond 10 years after the PhD for any member of the group for certain properly documented circumstances such as maternity and paternity leaves, clinical training, long-term illness, national service, natural disaster or seeking asylum.
- There is no specific diploma or age requirement for representatives of stakeholder organizations.

Applications

Applications must be submitted in English as PDF files.

Applications should include the following:

1. A **300-word abstract**
2. A **project proposal (max. 3000 words, excluding references)**
Alternatively, applicants may submit a video presentation (max. 15 minutes). In this case, please include the link in the abstract.
The proposal should describe the research question, the planned approach, the team's motivation, and the societal relevance and interdisciplinary nature of the project.
3. A **work plan** covering the full duration of the project, including:
 - planned meetings (tentative dates)
 - preferred hosting IASs, along with a brief explanation of the choice
 - an indicative timeline of activities
4. A **short description of the team**

5. **CVs for all participants**, including an indication of their institutional affiliation and expected place of departure for travel (max 3 pages per team member)
6. **Letters of support:**
 - two letters from academic researchers
 - additional letters from non-academic stakeholders are encouraged

Incomplete applications will not be considered.

Selection and evaluation process

The selection process consists of several stages and involves both the participating institutes and external reviewers.

Following an initial review by the participating institutes, a shortlist of proposals will be selected for external evaluation. Shortlisted applications will be reviewed by external experts, and final decisions will be made jointly by representatives of the participating institutes.

Proposals will be assessed based on:

- the academic quality and originality of the project
- its interdisciplinary approach
- its relevance to current or emerging societal challenges
- the quality and composition of the team
- the feasibility and coherence of the work plan

Teams may indicate preferred hosting institutes in their application and are asked to briefly explain their choice. These preferences will be taken into consideration during the selection process. The CAT selection committee will make the final decision on which institutes will host each selected group. Selected projects will be given a binding list of hosting institutes, which is not negotiable.

The dates of the planned stays will then be arranged in coordination between the selected teams and the hosting institutes.

Due to the structure of the selection process, individual feedback on applications cannot be provided.

Applications must be submitted via email to:

Ellen Werner, Programme Coordinator

ellen.werner@swedishcollegium.se

There will be two Zoom sessions offered to interested applicants to address questions regarding the programme, eligibility requirements and the application process:

- 5 June, 10:00–11:00
- 24 August, 16:00–17:00

Those wishing to participate are kindly asked to register by sending an email to Ellen Werner at ellen.werner@swedishcollegium.se.

Schedule

Deadline for applications: 13 September 2026, 15:00 CET

Successful applications will be notified by the end of December, 2026.

Stays at the institutes will take place between January 2027 and December 2029.

Institutes Participating in the 2027 call for applications:

- Aarhus Institute for Advanced Studies, Denmark
- Center for Interdisciplinary Research, German
- Centre for Advanced Study at the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters, Norway
- Centre for Advanced Study Sofia, Bulgaria
- Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities, United Kingdom
- Collegium De Lyon, France
- Collegium Helveticum, Switzerland
- Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies, Germany
- Hamburg Institute for Advanced Study, Germany
- Hanse-Wissenschaftskolleg, Germany
- Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, Finland
- Iméra – Institute for Advanced Study, France
- Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen, Austria
- Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, United Kingdom
- Institute for Advanced Study at CEU, Budapest
- Institute of Advanced Studies of Bologna, Italy
- Israel Institute for Advanced Studies, Israel
- Madrid Institute for Advanced Study, Madrid
- Montpellier Advanced Knowledge Institute on Transitions, France
- Nantes Institute for Advanced Study, France
- New Europe College Institute for Advanced Study, Romania
- Paris Institute for Advanced Study, France
- Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study, Sweden
- Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, Germany
- Zukunftskolleg, Germany