

## Challenges in Working Life 2023

### Information about the call for proposals

The Swedish Government has tasked Forte with conducting a national research programme on working life. This programme is intended to help meet challenges in working life by developing and disseminating knowledge.

Forte has identified a number of high-priority challenges for which the need for knowledge is great and more research is needed. A total of SEK 120 million has been allocated to the call for the period 2023–2028.

*The deadline for applications is 17 January 2023 at 14:00.*

### Background

The National Programme for Working Life address three identified challenges in working life:

- Creating a sustainable, inclusive working life.
- Promoting good working conditions.
- Achieving a health-promoting working life.

The three challenges are described in the [Strategic Research Agenda for the National Programme on Working Life](#), alongside a number of strategies for how research can meet these challenges. These form the basis for the focus of this call for proposals.

Forte's work is also expected to contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda. This call is part of that work. The research funded by this call is expected to be relevant to several of the national objectives adopted by the Riksdag as the core of Sweden's efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda.

### Focus areas

Forte has prioritised challenges where the need for knowledge is great and the scope of current research insufficient. Applications to this call should focus on one or more of the themes described below.

An application may relate to either basic or needs-driven research. Research groups must include expertise from multiple research disciplines and both senior and junior researchers. More detailed information about the mission and focus of the programme on working life can be found in the strategic agenda.

### **The significance of digital technology to an efficient and flexible working life linked to people's conditions and needs**

Questions about the interaction between digital aids, people, workplaces and culture are more relevant than ever. Digitisation affects groups of workers in different ways; for some, it is blurring the boundary between working and private life, with wide ranging consequences for the work environment, working conditions and health. Technological advances may also facilitate changes to governance and organisation that have an uneven impact on societal groups and sectors. Digitisation is also linked to the discourse on surveillance and privacy in the workplace.

Important areas of knowledge include: the design and use of digital tools and technologies; innovative methods to improve the organisation of work, products and services; impact on the psychosocial work environment in terms of increased cognitive load and information overload; and the consequences of technological development for the physical work environment.

### **The green transition and working life**

The countries of the world have undertaken to radically reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to prepare and adapt society for the unavoidable consequences of climate change. The green transition also involves using resources efficiently, protecting and promoting biodiversity and reducing pollution. Industries are drawing up their own roadmaps for becoming fossil-free and resource-effective, while companies are scrutinising their operations and markets are being created for new products and services. At the same time, other industries will struggle to make the transition or may simply be eliminated.

It is anticipated that the green transition will have a significant impact on working life in terms of the labour market, the organisation of work and the work environment. These changes bring both opportunities and challenges. Some jobs will disappear, and new ones will be created. To be able to succeed with the green transition, society needs to provide the education and skills in the sectors significant to the transition. Change of profession must be made possible and skills will need to be matched within and between the industries that can expect to be on the frontline of the transition. Projections are required concerning which jobs will become more or less important. We must prepare to implement relevant training and education initiatives based on up-to-date research, as well as knowledge-based interventions to support individuals and communities as they go through the transition, and research is needed into how a good work environment can be ensured as society transitions. Forte's report on the [green transition and working life](#) describes theoretical orientation as well as research needs.

### **Developing the welfare state to support a sustainable working life**

A functioning welfare state is a precondition for inclusive working life, sustainable skills supply, increased labour force participation and other aspects of a sustainable working life. This includes how the social security system functions when people lose their job, are on sick leave, become parents, get a new job or in general to maintain a good standard of living.

The welfare system is important to achieving work-life balance, to managing the social and economic consequences of combining starting a family with work, and to dealing with illness and other unexpected events. The question of how well the welfare system functions and contributes to a sustainable working life must also be examined in the light of digitisation, which brings with it new forms of employment such as the gig economy, where the traditional roles of employer and employee are no longer as clear and the ability of the welfare state to support the individual worker is called into question.

### **Female-dominated occupations: The physical and psychosocial work environment, linked to the status and wages of female-dominated occupations**

While Sweden is widely considered one of the world's most gender-equal countries, men and women work on different terms. In part, this is a consequence of the gender division of the Swedish labour market and the different values placed on men's and women's work in various ways, with female-dominated occupations tending to be undervalued. Women take more parental leave, are more likely to work part-time and are paid less despite having the same skills and experience.

There is often an inseparable link between physical and psychological risks in the work environment. Despite major efforts to improve physical work environments, they remain a significant cause of ill health. Knowledge of the physical and psychological burden of work and of the risks of chemical exposure is therefore equally important to a sustainable and health-promoting working life from a gender-equality perspective. Psychosocial problems account for a significant part of work-related ill health and the majority of sick leave. Contributing factors include lack of control over one's work, lack of managerial support, deteriorating job satisfaction and prolonged stress.

From an equal opportunities and gender-equality perspective, the nature of the work environment is related to occupational status, the typical level of education of employees and wage/salary levels. Research is needed to clarify these relationships and the consequences thereof and to create conditions and develop methods for a more gender-equal working life.

### **The 2030 Agenda and Sweden's national objectives**

Scientific knowledge is a prerequisite for achieving the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda. One overarching goal of the working life programme is that it should generate research that contributes to achieving the SDGs.

The national objectives adopted by the Riksdag reflect Sweden's conditions and opportunities for doing so. National objectives are described in the Government Offices of Sweden's [Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). They provide a complementary holistic perspective on already adopted objectives. The national objectives place particular emphasis on the central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda: leave no one behind. For example, SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, is reflected in the Swedish Government's Work Environment Strategy.

Potentially, the research funded by the working life programme can contribute to many of the national objectives as described in the strategic agenda for the programme.

## Grant types

This call is for programme support grants. Programme support grants are intended to build up new or to strengthen and develop existing research environments of a certain size that address common research questions and research areas. The aim is to build knowledge and develop competence in strategic areas in the long term.

## Limitations

The same person can submit one application as main applicant and one application as co-applicant, or two applications as co-applicant.

! Please note that the maximum amounts below include so-called indirect costs.

## Programme grant

Programme support grants are intended to build up new or to strengthen and develop existing research environments of a certain size that address common research questions and research areas. In the application, it must be stated what the international connection looks like and that the research group consists of both established and more junior researchers. See call-specific criteria below.

The grant is applied for six years but starting July 1, 2023, and the programme ends June 30, 2029. The application must describe the work on all six years of the programme and also the budget for the entire period.

- **Budget limit:** Maximum SEK 24 million for the whole programme period. Annual budget may not exceed SEK 4 million (including indirect costs).
- **Eligibility requirements:** To apply for a programme grant you must have completed a doctoral degree no later than the date of the call closing.

## The application process

All applications are to be submitted via the [Prisma application and review system](#). Before writing your application, make sure the following conditions are met:

- You have created a personal account in Prisma
- All participating researchers have created personal accounts in Prisma
- Each participating researcher has stored personal data, CV and publications on their accounts
- Your administrating organisation has an organisational account in Prisma and has been approved as an administrating organisation at Forte. [Read more about Forte's criteria for administrating organisations.](#)

In order for your application to be considered, the final reporting for any previously approved projects must have been submitted. This only applies to grants where the

deadline for final reporting has passed. Any previously granted extensions of project duration, and consequently of reporting deadlines, will be taken into account.

For more information on how to fill out the application, see instructions on the call's website.

## **The review process**

The applications are assessed by a review panel composed of international researchers and Swedish society representatives. Funding decisions are made by Forte's board.

Since applications are reviewed by international experts, your application should be written in English (except for fields where Swedish is specifically requested). If the application is written in Swedish, the quality of the assessment may be compromised. Forte is not responsible for the quality of any translations.

## **Forte's assessment criteria**

### *Scientific quality:*

- Purpose, research questions, theoretical framework, background and originality
- Study design, methods for data collection and analysis
- Interdisciplinary and/or multidisciplinary approach
- Sex and gender perspectives in the content of the research

### *Relevance:*

- Relevance in relation to societal needs, Forte's areas of responsibility and the focus area of the call
- Engagement with end users
- Utilisation and communication of research results

### *Feasibility:*

- Work plan quality
- Research competence of project leader and research group
- Account of any previous own research in the area
- Staffing and budget, assessed on reasonableness

## **Call-specific assessment criteria**

The following criteria are important for fulfilling the purpose of the call and for developing the research field. To the extent applicable to the research, they are therefore to be taken into account in the application. Some of the criteria are also included in Forte's set assessment criteria, but since they are particularly important in this call, they are emphasised here.

- International cooperation. Cooperation that extends beyond the Nordic countries is especially encouraged.

- The transfer of expertise between less established and more established researchers. A good blend of researchers in project groups is encouraged in order to facilitate the transfer of expertise.
- Interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches.
- Collaboration with the likely users of research results.
- Dissemination and practical application of the research.
- The project contributes to achieving one or more of Sweden's national goals for implementing the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda. It is clear which national goals/SDGs the project contributes to and how it does so.

### **Guidelines on how Forte handles applications where part of the research is to be carried out abroad**

- Forte is positive towards international research collaborations. Forte's area of responsibility covers complex societal challenges in which international research collaborations can provide important contributions.
- Forte's grants can be used to finance research where certain parts are carried out in other countries. However, the research shall be initiated and led from Sweden or be a clear part of the collaborative research.
- Applications involving international collaborations are assessed against the same criteria as other research applications and by the same review panels.
- In assessing research applications, the reviewers in Forte's review panels shall assess if any foreign section of a project brings added value to a project or is a prerequisite for a project with, for example, a global or comparative approach.
- It is the main applicant's responsibility to: find out how his or her administrating organisation stands on financing research where certain parts are carried out in other countries; and, find suitable collaboration procedures in each specific case.
- It is the grant's administrating organisation, i.e., the main applicant's home institution in Sweden, that determines and is responsible for, if necessary, appointing foreign personnel or paying for activities or services carried out in other countries.

### **Open access**

Results from research funded by Forte shall be published with open access. [Read more about Forte's guidelines for publication with open access.](#)

### **SweCRIS**

Forte transfers information of issued grants to SweCRIS, a national database on grant-funded research set up at the request of the government. [Read more about SweCRIS.](#)

### **Time plan**

The call opens: **13 October 2022 10:00 CEST**

The call closes: **17 January 2023 14:00 CET**

Forte's board decides on funding: **May 2023**

Decisions are published: **Short after Forte's board decision**

Project start: **1 July 2023**