



## **2026 Call for Working Group Proposals Forest Invasion Synthesis Centre, Prague**

The objective of the [Forest Invasion Synthesis Centre, Prague](https://www.forestinvasion.cz) (FISC ) is to apply the synthesis centre concept to the ecology and socioeconomics of biological invasions in forests and their management. The synthesis centre concept has been implemented at different centres around the world that each focus on unique scientific areas (<https://synthesis-consortium.org>) and these implementations have resulted in highly influential actionable research outcomes. The concept of synthesis research focuses on assembling interdisciplinary research in novel ways to collaboratively find solutions to problems. As such, socio-ecological synthesis research does not involve collection of new data but rather emphasizes the compilation and analysis of existing data and concepts by interdisciplinary teams. Working groups are central to the concept of a socio-ecological synthesis centre.

The Forest Invasion Synthesis Centre, Prague hosts working groups that collaborate on synthetic (utilizing existing results, data or models) scientific or policy projects. These working groups are typically teams of interdisciplinary scientists or practitioners from various institutions around the world. Diversity is crucial to the success of a working group because the greatest opportunities for innovation lay at the often-neglected intersection of different fields; interdisciplinarity among participants facilitates cross-fertilization among scientific disciplines leading to innovative outcomes. This diversity includes interdisciplinarity of scientific fields, but also diversity of gender, career stage and national origins. Participants assemble through online meetings and in-person meetings at FISC to work collaboratively on problems related to biological invasions (typically plants, insects or tree pathogens, but may include other taxa) in forests. These projects typically focus on ecological, socio-economic or management aspects of invasions.

In May 2025 FISC hosted an inaugural symposium with the purpose of identifying topics for working group focus. Please view <https://www.forestinvasion.cz/news/inaugural-symposium-summary> for information on the ideas that came from that program. While FISC welcomes proposals on all aspects of biological invasions in forests, the information here provides a good reference point to the scope of FISC.

Support is provided for two types of working groups:

- 1) Synthetic working groups – these groups typically focus on synthesizing existing knowledge in a new way, typically resulting in a review paper, policy brief or similar outputs. FISC typically supports a single 4-5 day meeting for such groups.

- 2) Data analysis working groups – these groups typically assemble existing data and perform analyses targeting specific research questions. FISC typically supports two 4-5 day meetings held at FISC 6-12 months apart.

Every year FISC has a call for proposals for new working groups. This support mainly includes financing travel for in-person meetings at FISC in Prague, but it also includes support in the form of advice (technical and conceptual) and participation from FISC staff. Proposals can be submitted by any individual (or team) that wishes to organize and lead a working group focusing on a specific topic.

We implement a two-stage proposal process in which investigators are requested to initially submit a pre-proposal. We will review the first-stage proposals and for those that show the most promise for implementation, we will request a slightly expanded proposal with more detail.

#### **First-stage Proposal Sections:**

- **Background:** No more than 1,000 words introducing the problem area and a strategy for addressing that problem. This description should include information on why a FISC working group is well suited for the problem.
- **Working group objectives:** Describe the objectives and any sub-objectives of the project
- **Timetable of working group activities** (e.g., online meetings, in-person meetings, anticipation of manuscript completion, etc.)
- **Preliminary list of deliverables** (e.g., new databases, manuscripts, management and policy recommendations, software packages)
- **A preliminary list of proposed participants** (see below). Participants do not need to confirm their willingness until the working group has been approved.
- **References**
- **Brief CV** (2 page maximum) of working group leader(s)

#### **Working Group Guidelines**

- **One or two working group leaders:** We request that working groups be led by one or two researchers and/or innovators. These individuals will work with FISC personnel to finalize the list of members and meetings. The working group leader(s) will also lead group discussions, coordinate focused group work, take responsibility for keeping the group on course, and communicate with FISC staff on progress and other matters.
- **Numbers of participants:** We suggest 5 to 10 participants. Approval of final proposal will be contingent on limiting the numbers of participants such that total anticipated travel expenses do not exceed a budget specified by FISC.

- **Emphasis on interdisciplinary composition:** Assembling a team of scientists that have a long history of collaboration is of limited value. We encourage proposals that bring together participants from different disciplines.
- **Diversity of attendees:** Working group member composition should reflect a diversity of gender (> 40 % female), type of institution, and career stage (each group should include at least one early career scientist).
- **Each working group must include at least one member of the [FISC core team](https://www.forestinvasion.cz/core-team) (<https://www.forestinvasion.cz/core-team>).** NOTE: FISC staff can work with you to identify this person
- **Each working group should include at least one individual (outside of FISC) from one of the [Widening Countries](https://rea.ec.europa.eu/horizon-europe-widening-who-should-apply_en) of the European Union** ([https://rea.ec.europa.eu/horizon-europe-widening-who-should-apply\\_en](https://rea.ec.europa.eu/horizon-europe-widening-who-should-apply_en))  
NOTE: FISC staff can work with you to identify this person.
- **We encourage participation by stakeholders** in working groups. Such individuals may not have a research background but may still have insight into the focal problem. NOTE: FISC staff can work with you to identify such individuals
- **Joint funding:** Though not a requirement, the contribution of outside funds to cover working group expenses is welcome.

### Working Group Operations

- **Reporting :** During the course of working group research, leaders must provide regular updates on activities and accomplishments.
- **Communication and dissemination:** Working group leaders will be approached by FISC communications staff to provide information about the group to be made available on FISC communication channels (e.g., webpages, newsletter, etc.).
- **Outputs:** Most working groups produce scientific publications and/or policy briefs. All outputs must acknowledge HIVE funding.
- **Adherence to standards:** WGs need to adhere to the principles of the [European Charter for Researchers](#), [FAIR principles](#), [Open Science Principles](#), and [GDPR](#).
- **Open access:** Peer-reviewed scientific publications relating to the results of the WG must be published in an open-access format (FISC can provide assistance).
- **Data storage and sharing platforms:** –During its operations, the WG follows the guidance of the FISC Data Steward.
- **Budget:** FISC provides financial support for travel, accommodation and subsistence of working group members attending working group meetings in-person at FISC. The working group budget will be developed by the working group leaders working with FISC staff.
- FISC will assist you with WG logistics administration and reimbursement

**Dates:**

- Deadline for submitting pre-proposals: 1 July 2026
- Preliminary approval of pre-proposals by FISC: 1 August 2026
- Final approval of proposals: 1 September 2026

**Evaluation Criteria**

- First stage proposals are evaluated by the FISC proposal review panel. The panel will select viable first stage proposals based on the alignment with working group guidelines shown above, alignment with the FISC focus areas on biological invasions in forests, novelty, and documented ability of working group leader(s) to meaningfully collaborate, unique knowledge of the subject matter, and a record of carrying out innovative science.
- Based on the evaluation of first stage proposals, leaders are asked to provide second stage proposals that contain more detailed information, including lists of participants with confirmed willingness to participate. FISC staff will provide guidance on participant composition and adherence to the working group budget. The review panel will rank second stage proposals to identify which working groups will be prioritized and supported.
- While the evaluation will consider past accomplishments of the working group leader(s), junior investigators are encouraged to organize working groups and their potential is evaluated separately.

**Mail pre-proposals and questions to: [fisc@fld.czu.cz](mailto:fisc@fld.czu.cz)**