



## **T-AP Call Scope - Preparing for Tomorrow: societies and strategies in times of transition**

### **1. Context, Scope and Aims of the Call**

*This section outlines the context, the basic scope and the overarching aims of the call.*

In recent decades, the world has entered a period of profound turbulence. The global landscape has been reshaped by climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, regional and global conflicts, political instability, financial and trade disruptions, the rise of disruptive emergent technologies (such as generative AI), and widespread epistemic crises. Such crises have been exacerbated by misinformation, disinformation, and the fragmentation of public discourse. Moreover, emerging technologies pose significant risks that can undermine the stability and resilience of democratic societies. Political extremism, shifting international alliances, and emerging cultural divides - driven by socioeconomic and technological transformations - continue to influence how societies understand, interact with one another, and envision the future. Yet, amidst this volatility, new and unforeseen opportunities are emerging: from advances in AI and medicine to breakthroughs in communication technologies. These innovations open up transformative possibilities and spaces for creative new solutions and developments.

In this global context, the **Trans-Atlantic Platform (T-AP)** seeks to foster innovative, transnational research that actively anticipates future developments, contributes to new knowledge and tools to help society respond to emerging challenges, and supports a resilient and inclusive future for all. The T-AP call *Preparing for Tomorrow* invites research on key questions that will define our shared future:

- How can we strengthen society's ability to anticipate and engage with emerging challenges and opportunities—and understand their complex interrelations?
- How can we design and implement effective strategies for planning and responding to uncertainty that foster international collaboration on issues of global significance?
- What kind of futures do we envision for human life? How do we want to shape it, and what direction should our societies evolve in response to past crises and future trends?

These questions can be explored from a wide range of disciplinary, methodological, theoretical, and applied perspectives within the social sciences and humanities.

The T-AP Call on *Preparing for Tomorrow* aims to:

- Catalyze and support transnational research teams from countries on both sides of the Atlantic, and beyond the North/South divide, to advance key insights from social sciences and humanities (SSH) research.

- Support innovative interdisciplinary research proposals, where appropriate, that contribute to the understanding of challenges and opportunities related to societies and strategies in times of transition.
- Encourage the co-development of robust and sustainable work programs with communities and key stakeholders, including local, regional, national, and international policymakers.
- Encourage diversity in research teams, including providing training and support to early-career researchers.

## 2. Objectives

*This section outlines the main objectives of research funded through the Preparing for Tomorrow call.*

Your research project should address one or more of the following objectives:

1. Strengthen conceptual frameworks and (descriptive, explanatory, or normative) theories related to foresight, crises, and collective response strategies.
2. Identify and/or assess interventions, strategies, and governance structures aimed at enhancing resilience, prevention, and preparedness for future crises and opportunities.
3. Provide empirical case studies illustrating how past, contemporary regional collectives perceive future opportunities and risks, and how they prepare for them.
4. Investigate how disruptive technologies and new media shape both the emergence and perception of future opportunities and crises.

## 3. Type of research that can be funded

The *Preparing for Tomorrow* call supports social sciences, humanities and/or interdisciplinary research focused on the themes described below. We invite proposals that use all relevant methodologies, whether qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods. Proposals may also include methods or approaches that emphasize theory development, conceptual and normative inquiry, and future-oriented methodologies such as, including simulations, visioning, risk analysis, modelling, and scenario construction. Historical inquiry that helps us understand the present and the future are also welcome. This list is not exhaustive, and applicants can focus their work on other methodologies or approaches relevant to the call.

## 4. Overarching themes for Preparing for Tomorrow

*Overview of themes for investigation for Preparing for Tomorrow*

The *Preparing for Tomorrow* call will focus on the following themes:

1. Uncertainty: Sources, Costs, Communication, and Improvement
2. The Many Faces of the Future and Crisis: Historical, Cultural, and Regional Perspectives

3. Scope and Coordination of Response Strategies
4. Normative Inquiry into Prevention and Preparation for Future Crises

Together, these themes cover the essential dimensions of crisis understanding and management. They address the nature of uncertainty, the diversity of societal experiences, the mechanisms of coordinated response, and the normative considerations that shape how societies choose to prevent and prepare for future crises. Taken together, they support a comprehensive research agenda capable of informing resilient, equitable, and forward-looking strategies for societies navigating crises and transitions. While proposals do not need to address all themes simultaneously, each contributes to the broader goal of strengthening societal preparedness.

Under each theme, possible research questions are presented. These questions may be broad or more narrowly related to specific cases, areas, regions, and times. The list of research questions is exemplary rather than exhaustive and can be adapted to different contexts. Applicants are invited to explore different questions related to the call on their research projects if they wish.

#### **4.1 Uncertainty: Sources, Costs, Communication, and Improvement**

Projections of the future are inherently uncertain. They are shaped by inductive reasoning and probabilistic thinking—often involving highly unlikely or unpredictable outcomes. Some events, such as *Black Swan* phenomena, arrive completely unexpectedly. Emerging technologies (such as AI, quantum computing) with the potential to affect various areas of society, could have a significant impact and may introduce uncertainty across the broader societal landscape. Uncertainty may trigger the demand for simple answers to complex questions and thus pose a threat to the democratic negotiation of social problems. There may also be areas in which uncertainty itself is helpful and even beneficial to our collective well-being.

*Possible research questions:*

- How can we enhance our predictive and foresight capacities—through emerging technologies, creativity, evidence-based methods, and robust transnational collaborations?
- What are the societal consequences and policy implications of the emergence of new, and often unforeseen, uncertainties?
- How should researchers, media and communicators convey these uncertainties to the public, policymakers, and entrepreneurs?
- How should education improve on citizens' uncertainty literacy, both with respect to understanding uncertainty and acting upon it?
- How does the deeper awareness of uncertainties influence strategic planning and policymaking?

- How do technologies, natural and environmental factors affect our degree of uncertainty?
- When is uncertainty dangerous; and when can we live with it or even embrace it?

#### **4.2 The Many Faces of the Future and Crisis: Historical, Cultural, and Regional Perspectives**

Modern Western societies often exhibit a low tolerance for risk and a heightened concern for the distant future. However, conceptions of crisis, risk, and the future vary widely across time and cultures. Historical and non-Western perspectives—particularly from the Global South or Indigenous populations—offer alternative ontological and epistemological frameworks for understanding and designing futures, articulating notions of progress, and responding to uncertainty. They also highlight how earlier experiences and heritage times of transformation and crisis, and how the past contributes to building future-oriented responses. Exploring and experimenting with these diverse viewpoints allows us to better contextualize Western paradigms and enrich our understanding of global plurality. Comparative, historical, and/or regional analyses can help uncover overlooked insights and challenge conventional assumptions.

*Possible research questions:*

- How have past societies responded to the challenges of building future-oriented orders?
- How have regional and cultural backgrounds or assumptions shaped the ways in which action in the global realm has been conceived or practiced?
- What is the relationship between, on the one hand, tangible and intangible heritage - including ancestral knowledge - and attempts to build a future-oriented order?
- How do historical experiences shape perceptions of future risk?
- In what ways do expectations of progress raise or limit the level of risk aversion?

#### **4.3 Scope and Coordination of Response Strategies**

Recent global crises have underscored the importance—and the limitations—of existing institutional responses. Addressing challenges that transcend borders demands a reassessment of how we coordinate action at national, regional, and global levels. What kinds of transnational partnerships, institutions, and governance models are needed to respond effectively to future risks and opportunities? This theme invites an assessment, and possible rethinking, of international institutions, policies, and social movements regarding environmental issues (e.g., climate change), trade relations, public health, emerging technologies, geoeconomic or geopolitical dependencies, and informal governance structures.

*Possible research questions:*

- Where have current policies and institutions succeeded or fallen short?
- How should policies and institutions be designed to better address emerging technologies, environmental risk, trade relations, or public health crises in the face of new uncertainties?
- Should we prioritize more inclusive, regional, and bottom-up approaches that amplify voices previously unheard?
- If so, what implications does this have for the methods and epistemologies that we employ in academic and policy research?
- In what domains (policy, culture, law, technology) are more bottom-up and regional approaches called for?
- In what domains are top-down and global approaches needed or even desired?

#### **4.4 Normative Inquiry into Prevention and Preparation for Future Crises**

Investing in crisis prevention and future preparedness raises complex normative and instrumental questions. Change and anticipated change are experienced differently. The identification of 'crisis' can therefore be a contested process with political implications. Normative inquiry is needed to identify principles, norms and rules that should guide this process.

*Possible research questions:*

- How should we allocate limited resources between immediate needs and long-term resilience?
- What will be the implications and consequences of specific measures, practices, and regulations?
- What probability threshold should a future harm exceed before it justifies present-day action?
- How do we balance the protection of liberal rights, such as privacy and individual freedom, with the imperative to prevent harm?
- What ethical trade-offs are acceptable between mitigating future risks and preserving the freedoms that define open societies?
- How have such questions been addressed in past contexts?