



BRIDGES Research Program
Fisheries and Biodiversity in the Western Indian Ocean

CALL FOR PHD THESES 2026

—

INTEGRATED THESES AND TRAINING PROGRAMS



Table of contents

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Context	4
2. Objective and content of the call for theses	4
3. Eligibility criteria	5
4. Evaluation of topics	6
5. Schedule for the call for theses	6

APPLICATION FILE

1. Scientific description of the thesis project	8
2. Resources provided by the supervisory team for the successful completion of the thesis	8
Summary table of general information	9





BRIDGES Research Program
Fisheries and Biodiversity in the Western Indian Ocean

TERMS OF REFERENCE



The France 2030 'BRIDGES - Fisheries and Biodiversity in the Indian Ocean research program' led by the CNRS, the Research Institute for Exploitation of the Sea (Ifremer) and the Research Institute for Development (IRD) is funding a minimum of nine PhD contracts to begin in the 2026 academic year.

1. Context

BRIDGES is an interdisciplinary research and scientific cooperation program (PEPR). Its aim is to identify and jointly develop solutions for biodiversity conservation and fair and sustainable fishing in the South-West Indian Ocean (SWIO).

During the ten-year duration of BRIDGES from 2023 to 2033, the aim is to explore how to design, link and implement spatial management tools, including marine protected areas, to ensure biodiversity conservation, food security, environmental justice and the peaceful governance of fishery resource in a region where global changes are exacerbating tensions and competition for the use of fishery resources. BRIDGES has federated a broad scientific and institutional community to work towards the common goal of strengthening the social and ecological resilience of the marine territories of the SWIO.

The BRIDGES program has been structured into six interconnected Targeted Projects (TPs) (see <https://www.bridges-wio.com/fr/>) working across five workshop sites (one regional and four coastal) that are representative of the diversity of regional issues:

1. The regional site in the South-West Indian Ocean, including the Scattered Islands
2. The Comoros and their four marine protected areas
3. Mayotte and its Marine Natural Park
4. The west coast of Réunion Island, including its Natural Marine Reserve
5. Southern Mozambique - from Maputo Bay to Ponta de Ouro.

Joining BRIDGES means integrating a research program supported by the France 2030 investment plan that works at the crossroads of marine environmental sciences and the social sciences. It also means contributing to building bridges between knowledge, disciplines, territories and stakeholders to invent new sustainability models in the SWIO and beyond.

2. Objective and content of the call for theses

The overall aim of this call is to train a new generation of scientific experts capable of understanding, managing and transforming the SWIO basin's marine socio-ecological systems. Future BRIDGES PhD students will be encouraged to develop research that is grounded in local realities but also open to global issues. There are prospects for integration into the academic, political, entrepreneurial and associative spheres of the region and further afield.

The program will fund at least nine three-year PhD contracts, lasting three years, with each having a €20,000 research budget. The topics selected should contribute



to addressing the scientific challenges defined by BRIDGES in one or more of the workshop sites through proposing innovative approaches. These topics may involve a single discipline or be of a multi- or interdisciplinary nature. The whole group of PhD theses will be multidisciplinary in nature.

The PhD students selected will benefit from a compulsory, integrated training program that combines:

- scientific training (e.g. modelling of socio-ecological systems, observation, integrated analysis),
- transdisciplinary training (e.g. personal development, innovation, entrepreneurship), networking workshops to drive collaboration and co-construction among peers.

Missions linked to this program may be covered by the thesis environment budget.

3. Eligibility criteria

Thesis supervision

The theses can have two to three supervisors, one of whom must hold an HDR (Habilitation à diriger des recherches - Authorisation to supervise research) and be affiliated with a French doctoral school.

- One of the supervisors must be affiliated with a research laboratory under the joint supervisory authority of either the CNRS or the IRD.
- Only one topic can be submitted by a supervisor or co-supervisor.
- The main supervisors of four to five of the PhD contracts will be researchers who are not yet involved in BRIDGES.
- Also, the main supervisors of four to five of the PhD contracts could be researchers who are already involved in BRIDGES.
- Theses co-supervised by at least one person from the SWIO are strongly encouraged.

Thesis topics

Thesis topics must respect the three following conditions:

- They should contribute to addressing one of the BRIDGES program's challenges (please see <https://www.bridges-wio.com/phd-clusters/>)
- They should offer added scientific value in relation to the work programs of the target projects that are already funded in the framework of BRIDGES or propose noteworthy theoretical or methodological advances in the study of coastal and marine socio-ecological systems.
- They should contribute to BRIDGES' progress in at least one BRIDGES workshop site or put forward inter-site workshop approaches.

Future PhD students

- Students should be enrolled in a French doctoral school.
- Doctoral contracts should begin no later than October 31st 2026 so it is recommended (but not compulsory) to identify a candidate when submitting a project.
- The presence of the PhD students at the whole of the integrated training program is compulsory.



- Although the selection of PhD students is not part of this call for theses, the selection of PhD students from the SWIO is strongly encouraged.

4. Evaluation of topics

Thesis topics that fulfil the eligibility criteria will then be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- C1 - Scientific quality of the topic and added value for BRIDGES: coherency, rigour, scientific ambition, positioning as regards the state of the art and studies already carried out or ongoing at the workshop sites.
- C2 - Relevance to the BRIDGES challenges and issues: innovative nature, contribution to interdisciplinary dynamics, creation of new synergies between research teams and territories.
- C3 – Feasibility and supervision: clarity of objectives, feasibility, adequacy of resources, quality and relevance of joint supervision and partnership(s).

This evaluation will be carried out by the BRIDGES joint management team with support from the members of the program's international scientific committee and international experts who may be invited to participate according to the themes.

5. Schedule for the call for theses

Publication of the BRIDGES call for theses	Early November 2025
Deadline for receipt of topics	February 13th 2026 (12:00 noon, CET)
Publication of results	March 31st 2026
Start of PhD contracts	October 31st 2026 at the latest





BRIDGES Research Program
Fisheries and Biodiversity in the Western Indian Ocean

APPLICATION FILE



The application must be written in English, maximum 7 pages in Verdana 11 font (not including the summary table and one-page CV per thesis supervisor). Applications that are incomplete or do not comply with the guidelines will be ineligible.

Applications should be submitted on the Call's application platform between November 30th 2025 (opening of the platform; the link will be made available at <https://www.bridges-wio.com/phd-clusters>) and February 13th 2026 at 12 noon (CET).

1. Scientific description of the thesis project

5 pages max

- 1.1) Scientific context, state of the art
- 1.2) Scientific objectives and research question(s), originality of the subject
- 1.3) Contribution to the scientific challenges and issues of BRIDGES
- 1.4) Project implementation
 - 1.4.1) Methods
 - 1.4.2) Site(s) concerned or applicability to site(s) in the case of a methodological thesis
 - 1.4.3) Thesis timetable
- 1.5) Expected results
- 1.6) Academic and societal value
- 1.7) Potential risks and measures taken to avoid these
- 1.8) Bibliographical references

2. Resources provided by the supervisory team for the successful completion of the thesis

2 pages max

- 2.1) Hosting and material conditions: location(s) the student will be based at, access to analysis or modelling platforms, scientific environment, computer provided, quality of internet connection.
- 2.2) Financial conditions: please give details of expenditure items by category (operating costs, missions, small investments, other) and estimated amounts for these. Please note: the budget must include transport costs to attend training events (€7500 should be set aside). Accommodation costs will be covered by the BRIDGES programme.
- 2.3) Potential collaboration projects in France and/or abroad. Please indicate whether researcher(s) have already been contacted and if they have given their agreement.



Summary table of general information

Thesis topic	
Acronym	
Keywords (5 max)	
Thesis starting date	
Doctoral school you are affiliated to	
Abstract (400 words max)	
Supervisor 1	
First name SURNAME	
Email	
Organisation you are affiliated to	
Laboratory (name and code if 'UMR' (joint research unit), location)	
Doctoral school you are affiliated to	
Researcher who is member of BRIDGES (yes/no)	
If yes: specify role in BRIDGES	
Number of theses currently supervised	
1 st supervisor's signature	
Supervisor 2	
First name SURNAME	
Email	
Organisation you are affiliated to	
Laboratory (name and code if 'UMR' (joint research unit), location)	
Doctoral school you are affiliated to	
Researcher who is member of BRIDGES (yes/no)	
If yes: specify role in BRIDGES	
Number of theses currently supervised	
2 nd supervisor's signature	
Host laboratory(ies)	
Name, location (if several laboratories, specify the time spent in each)	





BRIDGES Research Program

Healthy ocean, protected fisheries

