

Call for Applications

CATS Fellowships 2026–2027

The [Centre for Applied Turkey Studies \(CATS\)](#) at Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), the Berlin-based German Institute for International and Security Affairs, is offering fellowships to post-doctoral researchers, think tank members, and practitioners working on Turkey-related issues. Researchers who have not yet completed their PhD but have a solid track record in Turkey-related research may apply, too.

For the funding period 2026–2027, CATS is offering fellowships on the following topics:

1) Digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Digitalisation and artificial intelligence (AI) are reshaping economies, societies, and political systems worldwide. Turkey is no exception. The country has invested in digital infrastructure, set targets in its national AI strategy, and made digitalisation a cornerstone of its broader development agenda. Yet its capacity in these two areas lags far behind that of key players, such as China, the US, the UK, and the Gulf countries. For German and European decision-makers, the Turkish digital trajectory is of direct relevance: Turkey is a crucial trading partner, a NATO ally, and an ambitious regional actor and how it governs and deploys digital technologies – from AI-driven public services to platform regulation and data governance – has tangible implications for European economic interests, regulatory standards, and security considerations. Developing a clearer understanding of Turkey's digitalisation process – its drivers, constraints, and regional consequences – is important.

The following questions and topics are of particular interest:

- What are the main pillars of Turkey's digitalisation strategy? How does Turkey position itself in an evolving global AI landscape? What are its key assumptions, motivations, goals, and limitations?
- The relationship between AI (and other emerging technologies) and developments in the defence industry: To what extent are AI and emerging technologies reshaping Turkey's threat perceptions, defence modernisation, and cyber resilience in the context of hybrid warfare?

- The relationship between AI and digital infrastructure and domestic politics: To what extent have digitalisation and AI reconfigured repression mechanisms and the structure of state authority in Turkey? Does AI integration in public administration and regulation in Turkey enhance institutional resilience and governance effectiveness or does it reinforce centralisation and executive dominance?
- How does AI figure in Turkey's policies on economic growth, industrial development, and labour market restructuring?

2) Critical Raw Materials (CRMs)

Critical Raw Materials (CRMs) are becoming increasingly important for sectors such as green transition, digitalisation, defence, and the transformation of the automotive industry. Turkey claims to have the world's second-largest rare-earth element deposit. It is a member of the Minerals Security Partnership, which includes the EU and the US as the group's form's leading actors; and in 2024, it signed a Memorandum of Understanding with China on cooperation in natural resources and mining, including critical minerals. Turkish policy on CRMs, its relationship to the country's foreign and domestic policy agenda, and the opportunities and challenges for cooperation with the EU are understudied topics.

Particularly relevant are the following themes and questions:

- Turkey's regulatory, financial, technological, and environmental governance capacity for the extraction and processing of critical raw materials: Does Turkey have a holistic strategy for extracting and processing CRMs? How is Ankara navigating the geoeconomic competition over CRMs? Does that navigation overlap or compete with its alliance commitments?
- The relationship between CRMs and Turkish foreign policy: What role do CRMs play in Turkish foreign-policymaking in regions such as Africa, the Western Balkans and the South Caucasus? How does Turkey use its CRM policies to position itself vis-à-vis the systemic rivalry between the US and China? What are the opportunities and challenges of closer EU-Turkey cooperation with respect to CRMs?
- The political economy of CRM extraction in Turkey: Who are the main actors? What are the main drivers? And what are the potential and challenges for the shift from a construction-led growth model towards resource-based industrial upgrading?

3) Energy Transition and Climate Change

Energy transition and climate change have become increasingly central to Turkey's domestic and foreign-policy agenda, with direct implications for Europe. This year

Turkey will finally host the UN Climate Change Conference (COP 31). However, the country faces significant structural challenges in its energy transition, while the accelerating impacts of climate change – from water scarcity to extreme weather events – are increasingly putting pressure on its society, economy, and institutions. Understanding these dynamics and their broader regional consequences is a prerequisite for informed German and European engagement with Turkey on climate and energy issues.

The following questions and topics are of particular interest:

- What does Turkey's energy transition roadmap look like – who are the key actors, what are the underlying assumptions, what are the structural limitations, and what are the implications for EU-Turkey relations?
- Is there friction between the energy security implications of Turkish foreign policy and the country's international climate commitments?
- How is climate change reshaping state-society relations, governance structures, and development priorities in Turkey?
- How do large-scale resource extraction and accelerating climate change affect access to, control over, and governance of water resources in Turkey?
- To what extent is water scarcity in Turkey shifting from an environmental management challenge to an issue related to political authority, social conflict, and security?

4) Turkish Foreign and Security Policy amid Geopolitical Turmoil

Situated at the intersection of Europe, Eurasia, and the Middle East, Turkey occupies an important place within an evolving geopolitical environment characterised by intensified global power rivalry, renewed militarisation, and growing competition over energy corridors and connectivity routes. As NATO's second-largest military power and with its significant operational experience and rapidly expanding defence-industrial base, Turkey has enhanced its capacity to project influence across multiple theatres. At the same time, its foreign and security policy reflects a complex interplay between so-called strategic autonomy, alliance commitments, regional activism, and domestic political and economic constraints. Though a longstanding NATO ally and an official candidate for EU membership – despite accession negotiations having been suspended since 2016 – Turkey has not shied away from pursuing a more diversified and pragmatic set of partnerships across both the Black Sea and MENA regions, at times risking tensions and frictions with its Western allies.

Particularly relevant are the following themes and questions:

- How do Turkish policymakers assess the current global geopolitical and geoeconomic landscape? What are the main objectives, strategic priorities,

instruments and limitations of Turkish foreign and security policy? What role do economic considerations, ideology, and regime stability play in this context?

- What are the key threat perceptions, assumptions, and drivers guiding Turkish policy in the maritime domain?
- How does Turkey position itself vis-à-vis regional actors in the South Caucasus? What are the patterns of cooperation and competition that can be observed between Turkey and the other Black Sea littoral states – Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, and Ukraine – in the context of the current geopolitical and security risks in the Black Sea region?
- To what extent does Turkey's engagement in the Caspian energy and regional infrastructure affect Europe's diversification efforts and the EU's long-term energy security strategy?

Applicants are required to provide evidence of extensive research experience and significant publications.

The selected CATS Fellows will have the opportunity to collaborate with researchers at CATS and SWP. Research results will appear in the form of peer-reviewed CATS and SWP publications. The working languages are English and German.

Fellowships will be granted **for a period of six to twelve months**, starting in **September 2026 at the earliest**. Fellows are expected to reside in Berlin for the duration of their fellowship (except during planned research trips) and will receive a monthly grant of **€3,000** as well as a budget for research trips. Travel costs to and from Berlin at the beginning and end of the fellowship will be covered separately by CATS. If a Fellow is accompanied by children for the duration of the fellowship period, additional support will be available.

Applications must be submitted in the form of a **single PDF document** containing the following (**in the specified order**) in English or German:

- A cover letter;
- A written proposal describing the applicant's research topic (five pages maximum, 2 cm margin, 1.5 spaced, 12pt Times New Roman font). This proposal must include:
 - A discussion of the research/project topic, relevant research questions/project objectives, and an explanation of the academic and policy relevance of the project
 - An overview of the state of research in the field
 - An overview of the theoretical and methodological approaches
 - A bibliography
- A CV that includes a list of academic publications; and
- Copies of relevant academic transcripts and/or diplomas (no translations required).

Applications will be evaluated by a committee consisting of CATS team members and selected experts from the SWP and the partner institutions of the CATS Network. The committee will place particular emphasis on the following criteria:

- Academic and professional merit based on the applicant's publications and work experience;
- Academic and political relevance to the research fields identified above;
- Coherence and feasibility; and
- Value of the project's public outreach dimension.

In the case of applications of equal merit, preference will be given to applicants who have not previously received CATS funding.

The **deadline for the CATS Fellowship 2026–2027 applications is 30 April 2026**. Please email your **application as a single PDF document to catsapplication@swp-berlin.org** (CATS Fellowship applications only). Incomplete applications will not be considered.

For further information on the CATS Fellowship 2026–2027 and any application-related queries, please contact CATS@swp-berlin.org.

More details on the CATS Network are available at <https://www.cats-network.eu/>.

As part of the application process, we will store and process the data you send us and share it with members of the committee, which will consist of SWP employees and other members of the CATS Network. Please read our [Privacy Policy](#). If you do not agree to the processing of your data by SWP, you can object at any time by contacting cats@swp-berlin.org.

Please also note our data protection declarations for events and stored addresses at SWP at <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/data-protection/>.

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