The aim of this project is to initiate a long-term longitudinal investigation of the development of wisdom. Why do some people become wiser in the course of their lives, even though they go through very painful experiences, whereas many others do not seem to learn and grow much? The main assumption underlying this project is that the individual differences in what and how much people learn from life are caused by a dynamic interaction of life-changing experiences with psychological resources: people at high levels of certain psychological resources can become wiser through a life challenge, whereas the same challenge may cause others to become embittered, helpless, or rigid. In the MORE Wisdom Model (Glück & Bluck, in press) we have proposed four relevant resources that interact with life challenges in fostering the development of wisdom: a sense of Mastery, Openness, Reflectivity, and Emotion Regulation/Empathy. In FWF project P21011 we have collected first cross-sectional evidence for the model and found indications for two more potential resources: process orientation and self-integration. However, to fully test the more complex predictions of the model, a longitudinal study is required.

This project initiates the "Carinthian Birthday Study (CARIBIS)," a prospective longitudinal investigation of the development of wisdom that is intended to span at least 20 years. Every year, on their birthday, participants are invited to reflect upon the past year by filling out a brief online questionnaire about important experiences, psychological resources, and wisdom and other outcomes. Every ten years, participants take part in a "comprehensive assessment" that investigates more outcome variables, external resources, and changes in their retrospective view on previous experiences. Thus, CARIBIS investigates longitudinally how psychological resources interact with life challenges in shaping what an individual learns from life.

The current project covers the first three years of CARIBIS, in which the longitudinal study is initiated. First, a new scale measure of the MORE resources is developed, and the measures for the annual online assessments are pilot-tested. Then, participants are recruited: a population-representative sample of 100 young adults (20-30 years), 100 early middle-aged adults (40-50), and 100 young-old adults (60-70), and a "high resource/high challenge" sample (N = 100) of people who are currently caregiving to a family member with cancer or dementia. They take part in a comprehensive entry assessment and a first one-year longitudinal study.