

FUNDING INITIATIVE

Open Up – New Research Spaces for the Humanities and Cultural Studies

Profile Area Exploration

Next deadline: see website



area of research: humanities, cultural studies, theoretical social sciences



type of funding: research projects, funding of a teaching substitute



up to 250,000 or 350,000 Euro



up to 1.5 years



research teams involving two or three investigators (main applicant has to be a member of a German university/research institution)



short proposal, anonymized application process



additional benefits: funding for communication of science and research



1 OBJECTIVES

PROFILE AREA “EXPLORATION”

In the profile area “Exploration”, the Volkswagen Foundation aims to provide researchers with opportunities to contribute to resolving major science-driven challenges with unorthodox questions and experimental methods. As a future lab, the Foundation wants to pave the way for new topics and research methods and establish previously untapped research fields.

THE INITIATIVE

The funding initiative “Open Up – New Research Spaces for the Humanities and Cultural Studies” aims at exploring new and so far untapped research spaces in the humanities and cultural sciences by funding projects, which are primarily concerned with reflecting and exploring original research approaches. This can be done, for example, by bringing together different perspectives in a novel way or by exploring new methodological approaches. In any case, it is about the process of discovery that creates space for the new and unpredictable – not about the final answer to a question or justification of a hypothesis. Explicitly sought are projects with a high degree of originality, which can also be accompanied by a corresponding high-risk character of the project – the possibility of not achieving the envisaged project goals therefore does not provide an argument against the approval of the project.

The initiative follows the assumption that new ideas and research spaces open up more easily where different perspectives come together in new constellations. By funding **research collaborations** of two or three researchers, the Foundation intends to facilitate the full creative potential of such an interaction of different expertise and perspectives.

An essential component of the funding is the discussion of (preliminary) results at a **workshop or small conference** in the last third of the funding period. On the one hand, this is intended to facilitate a transfer of research results to the respective scientific communities, which, due to the explorative nature of the projects, may be difficult to communicate via common forms of scientific publication. On the other hand, it is supposed to create an opportunity for critical reflection of ongoing research processes

both with scholars and, if appropriate, with non-academic actors (e.g. from sectors of culture, art, or business) and to incorporate this into the final project work.

An additional **kick-off event** at Herrenhausen Palace in Hanover organized by the Volkswagen Foundation will facilitate exchange and networking of the grantees at the beginning of the funding period.

2 SCOPE OF FUNDING AND GENERAL CONDITIONS

The funding initiative addresses teams of two or three researchers who aim to explore untapped and original research spaces. Projects involving empirical studies, data analysis, or interviews cannot be funded within this initiative. The funding period is 1.5 years. The total grant is limited to 250,000 euros for projects with two partners and 350,000 euros for projects with three partners.

Eligible for funding are

- scientists working in the humanities or cultural studies as well as scientists working in theoretical social sciences, who are employed at a scientific institution in Germany;
- at all career levels after the PhD;
- researchers from foreign institutions are welcome to apply as co-applicants.

The design of the budget is free and depends on the requirements of the respective project. Funding will be allocated on a lump-sum basis to enable a flexible reallocation of funds in accordance with the course of the project. Funding can be allocated to cover the following costs:

- personnel costs (own position or teaching substitute, but no additional scientific staff);
- non-personnel costs (such as travel and conference expenses, costs arising from the involvement of project partners within Germany and abroad, research stays at other institutions, workshops, translation costs etc.);
- mid-term Workshop (for planning and implementation, a lump sum of 10,000 euro should be included in the budget plan).

The Foundation aims to fund approx. **10 projects** per funding round. **A timely project start is assumed.**

3 APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCEDURE

Application

- **Short project description** and a **self-assessment** (see item 4: Application Checklist).
- Applications should be written in English or German.
- Submission via the electronic application system of the Volkswagen Foundation (see item 4.). Please familiarize yourself with the electronic application system at least three weeks before the deadline to avoid problems at the final stage of the application process.

The selection procedure is organized in the following way: First, all submitted short proposals will be reviewed and shortlisted by the Foundation's funding division. The resulting shortlist is then rated by an interdisciplinary jury in a double-blind way, i. e. with anonymized documents.

Criteria for the selection procedure

- Exploratory character of the research project
- Potential for opening up new and untapped research spaces
- Originality of the proposed approach and idea
- Scientific quality of the project
- Conclusiveness of the intended approach

Unfortunately, in view of the expected high number of applications, it will probably not be possible to provide more detailed reasons for decisions resulting from the review process or to obtain individual feedback from the jury. Likewise, it is not possible to provide information on the review status of individual applications during the selection process.

4 APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Please submit your application online via the Volkswagen Foundation's electronic application system, using the templates which can be found at the end of section 5 and on our website.

The following attachments should be uploaded (pdf files):

- **Short proposal** (max. 1.200 words)
 - incl. positioning of the project in the state of research (up to 20 references – not included in the word count)
- **Summary of the project** in German and English (max. 200 words each)
- **Self-assessment** addressing the following questions (max. 300 words):
 - Where do you see “the originality” and “the new” in your proposed project?
 - To what extent is your project characterized by an exploratory character compared to your other research projects?
 - Which difficulties or counter arguments do you expect and how would you like to address these at the outset?
 - Whom would you like to address with your project-accompanying workshop? Do you already have ideas regarding the design of this event?

All documents **should be anonymous** and omit the applicant's name, their institute's name, the career level, and any references by the applicant's group.

- Please enter an **approximate budget plan** directly in the application system and enter the budget plans for each applicant separately. In case you apply for personnel costs, please specify if the costs are for your own position or a teaching substitute. Please enter a sum of 10.000 EUR for the mid-term workshop.

Additionally, the following documents should be uploaded (these will only be used for internal processes and will not be made accessible to members of the jury):

- **Short CVs of all applicants** (max. 2 pages per applicant), including the position you hold at your institution, and a list of five selected publications (please submit all CVs in one file).
- **Miscellaneous** (optional)

Please inform yourself about the electronic application system of the Volkswagen Foundation prior to submitting your application. Information can be found in the document “Electronic Application System – Instructions and Tips” (see item 5). For technical questions regarding the use of the portal, please contact support@volkswagenstiftung.de.

5 CONTACT AND FURTHER INFORMATION

Further Information

Dr. Pierre Schwidlinski

E-Mail: schwidlinski@volkswagenstiftung.de

Tobias Schönwitz

E-Mail: schoenwitz@volkswagenStiftung.de

For telephone appointments:

Barbara Neubauer

+49 511 83 81 232

VolkswagenStiftung
Kastanienallee 35
30519 HANNOVER
GERMANY
www.volkswagenstiftung.de

Additional Information

- [Webpage Open Up](#)
- [Template Short Proposal \(download\)](#)
- [Template Self Assessment \(download\)](#)
- [Open Up – FAQs](#)
- [Application FAQs](#)
- [What we do NOT fund](#)
- [Electronic Application System – Instructions and Tips](#)
- [Volkswagen Foundation Electronic Application System](#)