

Funding Initiative

**Documentation of Endangered Languages –
Dokumentation bedrohter Sprachen (DobeS)****Application deadline**

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See also: www.mpi.nl/DOBES**I. Objectives**

Approximately 6500 languages are currently spoken world-wide. It can be assumed that around two-thirds of these languages will become extinct in the course of the 21st Century. All languages are intimately interlinked with the culture of their speakers, and all languages and cultures represent specific expressions of human thought and social organization. Therefore, with every language which becomes extinct priceless intellectual values will be lost forever. Neither national or international cultural authorities, nor the relevant academic disciplines have so far developed the capacity to make use of what may well be the last opportunity to ensure the comprehensive documentation of even just a few languages.

The Volkswagen Foundation hopes that its initiative will contribute towards stemming this irretrievable loss. In view of the foreseeable fact that some languages will rapidly become extinct within a mere one to two generations, systematic documentation would appear to be the task which most urgently needs to be tackled. Such documentation should be characterized by three key terms: data orientation, multifunctionality, and general accessibility.

The exemplary character of the program does not only pertain to the final product of the documentation of individual languages, but also to developing and testing new methods of researching, processing and archiving linguistic and cultural data. The program has a strong interdisciplinary orientation: it not only supports interdisciplinary data collection, it also intends to create opportunities for subsequent multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary utilization of the respective data.

II. Development of the Funding Initiative

The program started with a one-year initial phase when eight documentation projects and one digital multimedia archive project worked out the logistical, technical, linguistic and juridical framework of the archive on endangered languages, based on the fact that a common electronic archive requires linguistic and technical standardizations and that the documentation touches

important ethical and juridical questions. A detailed description of these standardizations, recommendations, constraints and contracts is available at the website www.mpi.nl/DOBES. The digital multimedia archive project is located at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen aiming at providing technical support for the documentation projects to collect, process and archive the data.

After having successfully installed the funding program on an international scale, a major objective of the Foundation starting in the program's main phase was to stimulate the capacity building of field linguists in Germany. That is why in international projects, the cooperation with the German partner has to be substantial and demonstrated in the working plan. German doctoral and postdoctoral students are especially welcome to ask for funding if their project is hosted by an academic institution.

The DobeS funding initiative now comes up to its final phase 2008-2011, widening the scope of project activities and broadening the types of grants awarded as well as the circle of potential applicants. Henceforth, especially junior researchers who participated in an earlier DobeS project are invited to submit an application as a team leader to get into their career. Not only social anthropologists, but also area specialists are encouraged to collaborate with linguists in the interdisciplinary project teams. Projects from areas hitherto underrepresented within the DobeS initiative will obtain certain preference. Capacity building in the target region and a policy of participation with the speech community are further specifications of the program.

III. Profile of the Projects

Two types of projects are funded:

- (a) Documentation projects which collect, process and archive linguistic and cultural data for (at least) one endangered language lacking sufficient documentation. Existing field material (audio, video, film, photo, texts) may be integrated into the planned documentation, but should be combined with new data collections.
- (b) Documentation projects which use the DobeS archive for scientific purposes for example for comparative studies but also to detect new research questions connecting documentation linguistics with other branches of linguistics.

The project period may span up to three years, but shorter term applications can be submitted, too. A follow-up for a second project phase is possible, but the total project period should not exceed 5 years.

The budget applied for should not exceed the amount of 300,000 EUR.

Which languages can be documented? A language shall be deemed to be endangered if, especially for political and economic reasons, its speech community has ceased to speak it in public in favor of the language of the sur-

rounding dominant culture. As a rule, the status of such a language deteriorates to that of a "home language" until, finally, its native speakers adopt the externally conveyed negative attitude towards it and cease to pass it on to their children. Documentation projects may focus on endangered dialects, moribund languages as well as sign languages, too.

Every set of language documentation should be preceded by a brief linguistic description of the language at issue with regard to its probable genetic affiliation and an outline of the social and historic situation of the language and its speech community. The actual documentation should be conceived as a corpus of primary data representing as many different types of texts as possible. These texts are to be presented on digital media containing the audio or video recording and – as minimal annotation standard – a transcription, a translation, and explanatory comments on the speech situation of the recording and its content. Apart from these obligatory tiers, other self defined annotations are possible. In addition to these text editions, the documentation may also encompass other systematically collected data on the language and the speech community such as photographs, music recordings etc.

The intention is that – in line with the data orientation criterion – the material which is collected should be processed into a documentation set which is distinct from the conventional style of language description, i.e., grammar and vocabulary. Apart from the primary data and their annotations, the documentation should encompass an outline of the phonetic system and a description of the transcription convention. It could also contain elicited data as, for instance, data on particular lexical fields (e.g. kinship terminology) and the morphology of the language.

The data should be presented in an intertheoretical format. It must be processed to such an extent that it can not only serve as the basis for linguistic research, but also – in line with the requisite multifunctionality feature – for analyses within the framework of other disciplines. For this reason it is intended that the data collection should encompass linguistic phenomena as part of an extensive cultural and social complex.

For the purposes of general availability and longterm utilization the data are to be digitized, transferred to standard digital multimedia representation formats and archived in such a manner that it is generally accessible within the juridical and ethical framework.

Whenever possible, regional institutions and researchers should be included in the project. To convey the knowledge and the methods of documentary linguistics, workshops and training courses should be organized; the documentation projects may also include funds for visiting fellowships of third world junior/senior researchers to come to Germany. In addition, the documentation project should be used to transfer basic linguistic knowledge to the speech communities themselves and help them to develop schooling material etc. In any case, the community should get copies of the documentation on CD ROM or a print out on paper (e.g. all written material such as transcriptions, translations, drawings, photographs etc.).

IV. Project Requirements

The support of documentation projects within the framework of this program shall be contingent upon the following conditions:

- The degree of endangerment of the language which is to be documented, the urgency of its need for documentation and its comprehensive documentation capacity shall be evidenced.
- The qualification of the project members for language documentation purposes shall be demonstrated. Such project members should be qualified academics, preferably from a variety of disciplines with field research experience. If possible, they should possess sufficient knowledge of the relevant contact language. Projects which are implemented within the framework of international academic collaboration, particularly including academics from the host country, will be especially welcomed.
- In addition, a willingness to process data in accordance with the three key terms of data orientation, multifunctionality and general accessibility is considered to be a prerequisite. Following the completion of the project, the project members will be granted the sole right of access to their data material for a period of up to three years for the purpose of achieving and presenting their own research results – e.g. in the form of a doctoral thesis.
- A willingness to accept the linguistic, technical and juridical framework which is defined by the goals of establishing a central digital archive for endangered languages is required.
- When an application is submitted, an official research permission and the consent of the relevant speech community to the documentation of its language should have been obtained.
- The institutional prerequisites for the organizational implementation of the documentation project for which an application is submitted should be in place. Centralized archiving notwithstanding, responsibility for the general accessibility of the documentation and continued data maintenance will lie with the applicants.
- A willingness to attend conferences and to participate in the regular training courses organized by the MPI within the framework of the program will be assumed provided that such meetings do not clash with field visits.

V. Project Funding Possibilities and Selection

Application deadline: 15 September 2010

The applications will be peer reviewed by an interdisciplinary and international expert panel.

VI. Symposia, Workshops, Summer Schools

Along with the projects there is a funding possibility for symposia, workshops, and summer schools on documenting endangered languages, or on specific program related issues.

Applications for symposia, workshops and summer schools may be submitted at any time.

VII. Delimitation

Orientation towards the documentation of endangered languages in the form of data corpora is a central criterion for assignment to the program. Therefore, projects and symposia/summer schools (1) for the documentation of non-endangered languages, (2) relating to already well-documented languages, (3) involving mainly theoretical and/or methodical objectives, (4) for which linguistic documentation is linked or subordinate to other objectives, such as missionary objectives, which may lead to the loss of the cultural traditions of a speech community, are excluded.

Documentation projects whose main objective is the compilation of dictionaries or grammar books without extensive collections of texts, and documentation projects incorporating exclusively existing field material are excluded or will be given low priority.

Download

Information for Applicants

http://www.volkswagenstiftung.de/fileadmin/downloads/merkblaetter/MB_67_e.pdf

Application Form

http://www.volkswagenstiftung.de/fileadmin/downloads/merkblaetter/MB_67e_e_application_form.rtf

VIII. How to apply

Proposals should be submitted in English. For processing the application a signed version via posted mail as well as the corresponding file via e-mail are needed. Applicants should ensure that electronic versions are identical to the hard copies of all documents submitted. Please download the application form (available at the download center in the section "service" of the Foundation's homepage).

Please note: The Foundation can provide funds only to academic institutions, but not to individuals. Applications from abroad are equivalent to German ones although, in order to be considered, they must demonstrate a defined and substantial cooperation with academic institutions and scholars in Germany in the working plan. German postdoctoral students are especially welcome to ask for funding if their project is hosted by an academic institution.

For German universities only:

Hinweise zur Beantragung einer Forschungsprofessur

Im Rahmen der Förderinitiative "Dokumentation bedrohter Sprachen" ermöglicht die Stiftung Hochschullehrerinnen und -lehrern an wissenschaftlichen Hochschulen in Deutschland mit einer so genannten Forschungsprofessur projektgebundene Freistellungen von ihren Lehr- und Verwaltungsaufgaben für sechs bis 24 Monate durch die Finanzierung einer Vertretung aus dem wissenschaftlichen Nachwuchs.

Die Beantragung einer Forschungsprofessur ist nur im Zusammenhang mit der Beantragung eines Forschungsvorhabens bzw. zu einem laufenden Projekt im Rahmen dieser Förderinitiative möglich. Die Stiftung erwartet im Antrag die Darstellung des Forschungsbeitrags zum Gesamtprojekt und die Präsentation eines Vertreters bzw. einer Vertreterin (Lebenslauf, Publikationsliste und Aufgabenbeschreibung). Es wird erwartet, dass die Vertretung aus dem Kreis des wissenschaftlichen Nachwuchses erfolgt, der damit Gelegenheit erhält, sich für Leitungspositionen zu qualifizieren. Für die Lehrvertretung werden max. 80.000 Euro pro Jahr bereitgestellt. Der Betrag darf nur für diesen Zweck verwendet werden und das Gehalt des zu vertretenden Stelleninhabers bzw. der Stelleninhaberin nicht überschreiten.

Die Stiftung geht davon aus, dass die Forschungsprofessoren unter Fortzahlung der Dienstbezüge freigestellt oder beurlaubt werden. Die Freistellung muss zusätzlich erfolgen und darf die öffentliche Hand bei der Gewährung üblicher Forschungsfreisemester nicht entlasten. Allenfalls kann der reguläre Turnus um den Zeitraum der Forschungsprofessur verlängert werden.

Zusätzlich zu den Informationen, die dem Antragsformular dieser Förderinitiative zu entnehmen sind, müssen Anträge auf Finanzierung einer Forschungsprofessur in einem eigenständigen Antragsteil bzw. in vier gesonderten PDF-Dateien folgendermaßen gegliederte Informationen enthalten:

A) Antragstext Forschungsprofessur

- Darstellung des eigenen Forschungsbeitrags zum Gesamtprojekt
- Begründung für die Notwendigkeit der Freistellung
- Dauer der Freistellung und zeitliche Integration in das Gesamtprojekt
- Angaben zur vorgesehenen Regelung der Lehrvertretung

B) Lebenslauf und Schriftenverzeichnis des Antragstellers bzw. der Antragstellerin einschließlich Angaben zum gegenwärtigen Status an der Hochschule (soweit nicht schon im Projektantrag enthalten)

C) Freistellungsbescheid des Antragstellers bzw. der Antragstellerin (bis spätestens drei Monate vor Beginn der Freistellung nachzureichen)

D) Lebenslauf und Schriftenverzeichnis des Vertreters bzw. der Vertreterin (bis spätestens drei Monate vor Beginn der Freistellung nachzureichen)