

## Between Europe and the Orient – A Focus on Research and Higher Education in/on Central Asia and the Caucasus

### I. Objectives

This funding initiative of the Volkswagen Foundation is designed to address two major goals: On the one hand, it intends to stimulate research interest in Central Asia and the Caucasus within the German scientific community, and to encourage its engagement in current developments in this region. On the other hand, it is meant to pave the way for making and broadening contacts with scientific institutions in the countries of the target region, and to improve conditions for research and higher education within these countries through scientific exchange with Germany.

The initiative focuses on those states in Central Asia and the Caucasus which became independent following the collapse of the Soviet Union, specifically Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tadjikistan, and Turkmenistan. It also includes Afghanistan and some parts of the Russian Federation in the lower Volga (Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, etc.) and the northern Caucasus regions.

### II. Scope

The funding initiative addresses the humanities and social sciences as well as the engineering and natural sciences (including theoretical medicine) and has two main sections:

The **first section** provides funding aimed at stimulating the research interest of German scholars in the region as well as promoting cooperation with local scientists. Special consideration will be given to **research projects** which investigate the political, socio-economic, cultural or natural characteristics of this region with a view to gaining a better understanding of the complex interplay between these factors. The main focus is to be on current developments as well as transformation processes in the above-mentioned countries. Historical, linguistic-philological or paleontological projects will only qualify for support if their objectives contribute to an understanding of current issues and of the present-day situation. Other bordering countries in the region (Turkey, Iran, etc.) may also be considered, provided such projects deal with aspects involving these countries' diverse relations with the target region, or contribute to comparative studies.

In addition to those disciplines which are already inherently involved with the region (for example, Central Asian studies, Eastern European studies, Caucasian, Turkish, Iranian, or Islamic studies), this part of the initiative is aimed at a broad spectrum of disciplines within the social sciences and humanities (political science, law, social and economic sciences, ethnology, geography, history, religious studies). Furthermore, it is open for transdisciplinary projects from other fields (biology, earth and agricultural sciences, etc.). It is expected

that projects comprise major contributions by scholars and scientists from the region and/or involve the training of junior academics. Cooperation with scientists and scholars from the region under investigation is particularly encouraged; joint projects in cooperation with academics from bordering states and, in exceptional cases, other countries may also be considered.

The **second section** aims to intensify cooperation with scholars and scientists from the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus, and to improve the local conditions for research and higher education in the target region. In this section, it is not mandatory that there be an involvement with issues relating to the region. The following activities may be supported:

**Partnership projects:** These projects – mainly from the field of natural and engineering sciences, but also outside of these – are designed especially to enable young scientists from countries in the target area to carry out research, based mainly at their home institutes, in close collaboration with their German colleagues. The aim is to help junior researchers contribute to scientific progress on an international level. Projects should be research-oriented and not merely concern a technology or methodology transfer.

**Reintegration of young academics:** Support is offered to highly qualified junior scholars and scientists who received their training outside the region and now wish to return to an academic institution in their home country. The Foundation will provide support to enable such persons to implement the skills acquired abroad in innovative projects in research or higher education.

**Infrastructural support for higher education and research:** In this context, funding may be made available for projects aimed at creating and improving training and research capacity in the countries of the target region. The projects should contain exemplary measures of infrastructural support for higher education and research important for the reform

process there. This may include university courses of academic study – for example, preparation of teaching material, development of curricula or introduction of new courses of study – as well as programs for the training and further education of junior scientists. Assistance in providing the infrastructure necessary for the implementation of joint research projects (equipment, computers, etc.) is also possible provided it is needed in the framework of a collaboration. It is expected that the preparation and implementation of all such endeavours be conducted in close cooperation with German colleagues and that the groundwork is laid for the cooperation to extend beyond the funding period.

In order to promote collaborative development of project ideas and facilitate initiation of cooperative projects the Foundation is planning to hold **thematically-oriented workshops** with the participation of junior academics. At these workshops, scholars and scientists from Central Asia and/or the Caucasus shall meet with their German colleagues both drawn from a broad, interdisciplinary range. The meetings are to serve the purpose of exploring issues of common interest, debating the current status of research and identifying potential partners for future cooperation. The Foundation invites suggestions concerning possible topics and formats of such workshops.

### III. Funding possibilities

Within the scope of the funding initiative funding is available for:

- Research projects (in the framework of the “first section”) with a duration of between two and three years by covering personnel (incl. scholarships) and non-personnel costs. Scientists from the target region may (and should) participate directly in the projects, either through research scholarships or work contracts. In this context, it is also possible to award individual scholarships for the further education of junior scientists and scholars. Should language training be necessary, the scholarships may be extended from 30 to a maximum of 42 months.

- Partnership projects by covering personnel and non-personnel costs of up to € 100.000 for a first project period of two to three years. The German partner's share of the budget should not exceed one third of the total amount and should be confined to visits to the partner institute, consumables and, if need be, student/graduate assistants. The foreign partner may request funds for travel (to the partner institute and/or to scientific meetings), consumables, equipment, literature, research associates, student/graduate assistants, or doctoral students ("sur-place" scholarships) at the local standard rate.
  - "Integration Support" for junior academics wishing to return to an academic institution in Central Asia and the Caucasus after completing their training in a country outside the region. Beside "topping up" their own salaries, support may encompass travel and infrastructure expenses (equipment, literature) as well as the funding of co-workers, research assistants and Ph.D. students (even setting up a junior research group). The funding period shall initially not exceed three years; under certain circumstances, the period may be extended by further three years.
  - Infrastructural support to improve the conditions for research and higher education in the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus. Interested scientists and scholars should first submit a general outline of the proposed project. Since it is usually not possible to conclude any detailed planning for more complex and long-term projects, applicants are advised to submit proposals for pilot projects which can later be extended step by step. Should such draft proposals conform to the funding initiative and be judged worthy of consideration, the Foundation will invite the initiators to prepare a detailed application; this procedure will by no means predetermine a subsequent decision.
  - Within the scope of the aforementioned items, also measures aimed at improving project management are eligible for funding, as well as language training to broaden communicative skills. This is generally intended to include the languages indigenous to the target region, as well as Russian for scientists from Germany, and German for scientists from the target region.
  - Symposia and summer schools in Germany and in Central Asia/Caucasus, either separately or in connection with one of the aforementioned schemes. The number of participants should not exceed 60 for the summer schools and 40 for a symposium. In addition to the payment of a travel allowance to participants, other non-personnel costs arising in connection with such events – in exceptional cases the costs for interpreters – may also be included.
- IV. Applications should be prepared according to the attached checklist.**
- The Foundation can provide funds only to academic institutions. Applicants who are not members of universities and other recognized research institutions should therefore supply details on the legal status, statutes, trustees and boards, charitable status, budgeting and auditing of their respective institution. Non-institutionalized project groups will be asked for detailed information on their legal and organizational status. If available, applicants are required to supply an annual report or a general description of their institutions.
- The Foundation will not consider applications on the same or a similar topic which simultaneously have been or are to be submitted to other funding agencies as well.
- Please submit your application electronically (preferably by e-mail with application and appendices as separate pdf-files) and also in hard copy. Applicants should ensure that electronic versions are identical to the hardcopies of all documents submitted.

## V. Information

Further information can be obtained from the office of the Volkswagen Foundation in Hannover, Germany.

For applications from the humanities and social sciences, please contact:

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## How to apply: Checklist

for the Funding Initiative

### “Between Europe and the Orient – A Focus on Research and Higher Education in/on Central Asia and the Caucasus”

Written applications may be addressed to the Volkswagen Foundation at any time and without any particular format requirements. The Foundation expects that the application be submitted by the German cooperation partner on behalf of all participants. In case the proposal is approved, the academic institution in Germany will be the recipient of the grant. Submission of a general **outline** of the project prior to the final application may be helpful, especially in the case of complex projects.

In the social sciences and humanities, applications may be submitted either in German or in English (with a summary and an appropriate title in German to be included); in the natural and engineering sciences, applications in English are strongly preferred. Applications should be submitted electronically (preferably by e-mail with application and appendices as separate pdf-files) and also in hard copy. It is the applicants' responsibility to make sure that the electronic and the paper version are identical. The proposal should be subdivided (and stored in separate pdf-files) as follows:

1. cover letter
2. proposal
  - cover sheet: particulars of all applicants (name, institution, address), project title, amount requested, project duration, recipient of the grant
  - abstract (approx. one page) summarizing objectives, rationale and implementation of the project
  - detailed project description (max. 20 pages): background, current state of research, objectives, hypotheses, methodological approach, expected results
  - working program and time schedule, including distribution of tasks among collaborators
  - specific details regarding the proposed cooperation with scientists and research institutions in Germany and abroad, along with details of any other contacts necessary for the implementation of the project
  - indication of whether this or a similar application has been or is to be submitted to any other funding agency
3. budget calculation **in Euro** for all institutions involved (itemized in terms of personnel costs, recurring and non-recurring costs), including justification of all positions

4. curricula vitae and list of relevant publications of all applicants and involved groups' previous work on the subject
  - supporting letter by foreign partners' institutions
5. bibliography

Applications for funding **scholarly meetings** (symposia and summer schools) should contain **additional** information about:

  - venue, date and duration of the proposed meeting
  - scientific program of the event, including time schedule
  - (tentative) list of participants and speakers including registrations approved (at least of those presenting papers) and details on how participants are selected

The general guidelines for scholarships are available on the Foundation's homepage (<http://www.volkswagenstiftung.de>) or may be mailed upon request.