

CALL

GLOBAL ISSUES – PREVENTING PANDEMICS: THE ROLE OF HUMAN-ENVIRONMENTAL INTERACTIONS

Deadline: 4 November 2021, noon (12 pm CET)

area of research: all disciplines



type of funding: international research projects



up to 1.5 million Euro



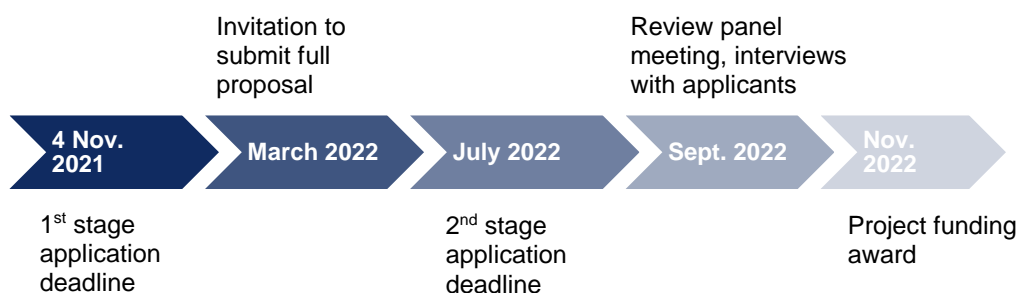
up to 4 years



inter- and transdisciplinary research teams (scholars from humanities or social sciences working together with natural, life or engineering scientists, plus societal stakeholders)



consortia involving 3-5 researchers from at least 3 different countries (including at least one applicant from a German university/research institution and at least two from institutions in two different non-European Low and Middle Income Countries)



1 BACKGROUND

This call is part of a funding framework entitled ‘Global Issues – Integrating Different Perspectives’ which aims to enable international research collaboration and to generate insights on understudied issues of urgent global relevance. The framework is the overarching umbrella for calls on different thematic areas, all of which reflect transformation challenges that have been acknowledged by the United Nations’ sustainable development agenda as requiring specific attention. It is embedded in the Foundation’s profile area “Societal Transformations” which aims at supporting research that both expands the knowledge base on societal transformations and provides impulses for shaping these processes.

‘Global Issues’ supports and strengthens innovative research in collaboration between researchers and societal stakeholders based in different parts of the world who usually do not join forces. By offering funding for international collaboration, the Foundation unites different research perspectives and approaches, and allows for the development of a global perspective on the issues under consideration. The Foundation strongly encourages innovative research that questions established preconceptions, moves beyond conventional questions and approaches, and significantly advances the current state of the art.

2 OBJECTIVES

Society and nature are two intricately interlinked dynamic systems, influencing and modifying each other: Human activities like expansion and intensification of agriculture, trade and consumption of wildlife, urbanization processes, or increased use of natural resources have an enormous impact on ecosystems; in turn, human beings are both part of and exposed to their biophysical environment. Too often, these systems have been looked at separately while their interaction should be in the focus of future research endeavors.

The intricacy between both spheres has been highlighted by the Covid-19 pandemic which drew the attention to the links between climate change, biodiversity loss and increase of pandemic risk factors. However, most of the activities initiated by science (and policy) have thus far been dealing with the consequences of this (or any other) pandemic *after it has emerged* instead of focusing how to prevent pandemics *from emerging*, i. e. to find ways how humankind and the environment could interact in order to circumvent such crises triggered by transmittable diseases like zoonoses.

This requires a reassessment of the relationship between humans and nature, considering the idea of planetary health. The key question to be addressed is: **How do human and environmental systems interact**, and how does this in consequence influence the emergence and spread of disease? To answer this question, funding is provided for research that addresses the complex societal and ecological dimensions of transmittable diseases to gain a better understanding of their connectivity, and to assess risks, conflicts, but also chances which come with these interdependencies: What are the underlying human-induced drivers, what are conducive or impeding structural frameworks and preconditions, how do perceptions of human-nature-relations influence human activities? And how can, on this basis, the emergence and spread of diseases be predicted and prevented?

Beyond this systems analysis, the question of **how science can support transformation processes to sustainability** should be paid equal attention to: Which options for action arise from the analysis of these interlinked systems? Which interventions at the interface of environment, animal health and human health can be developed to prevent and/or mitigate the impact of future pandemic outbreaks? Which adaptation strategies and transformation pathways, including their dissemination, can be identified?

Projects under this scheme should focus on highly dynamic areas with intensive human-environmental interactions, i.e. where high biodiversity encounters growing human pressure, like peri-urban areas or agriculture-“nature” margins, and concentrate on wildlife and its transmittable diseases.

3 FUNDING FRAMEWORK

Funding may be provided for **international** and **interdisciplinary research consortia** of **three to five researchers post PhD** (applicants) from at least three countries working together as equal partners.

- **International:** At least one applicant has to be an employee of a **German** university or research institution, and two applicants have to be affiliated to academic institutions in **non-European Low and Middle Income Countries** (LMICs according to the World Bank classification). For a four- or five-person consortium max. one additional researcher may be based in a High Income Country (HIC), and one or two additional researcher(s) in LMICs (the number of partners in LMICs has to at least match those in HICs).
- **Interdisciplinary:** The disciplinary composition of a consortium is dependent on the respective research question, but as a requirement researchers both from the social sciences or humanities and from the natural sciences (incl. life sciences and engineering) have to be involved (i.e. at least one applicant with a background in natural sciences/technology and one applicant with a background in social sciences/humanities).
- **Transdisciplinary:** Societal stakeholder involvement from the onset is mandatory. Both institutions (like NGOs) and informal entities (like local actors or communities) qualify as stakeholders.
- **Symmetric:** Genuine partnership and equity in inputs and benefits by and for all applicants are expected (regarding gender, geographical and disciplinary balance).

There are **two funding phases**:

Preparatory phase (1st stage)

Up to 15 preparatory grants of up to EUR 10.000 may be awarded to shortlisted applicants who will be invited to submit a full proposal (2nd stage application).

These grants can be used to cover preparatory meetings and workshops in early 2022.

Project phase (2nd stage)

Six to eight project grants of up to 1.5 million Euro each for a four-year duration may be awarded.

Funds can be made available for the following types of expenses and should be fairly distributed among the partners:

Personnel expenses: salaries for scientific, technical and administrative personnel according to local standards and the regulations of the home institution; top-ups for senior researchers; the main share going to early career researchers (PhD students and postdocs up to five years after their PhD)

- Travel costs: project meetings, longer stays at partner institutions, field work and data collection, conference participation, etc.
- Consumables, acquisition of data, services
- Equipment and other non-recurrent costs
- Science communication measures, outreach activities
- Stakeholder involvement (costs to cover the participation of non-academic stakeholders can be included in the budget of the academic partner(s)).
- Institutional overhead costs cannot be covered. However, funds to finance part time administrative/ coordinating support at one institution may be included as well as a lump sum for administrative costs of up to 10.000 Euro for each of the other partners.

NOTE:

The funds will be granted to the main applicant's institution in Germany. This institution will transfer the respective shares to the partner institutions. The German partner is responsible for financial reporting of the grant in total.

4 APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

Proposals are to be submitted in English.
The application process will comprise two stages.

The estimated **timeline** is as follows:

- Deadline for submitting a 5-page pre-proposals outlining the research project (1st stage):
4 November 2021, noon (12 pm CET) – late submissions will not be accepted
- Notification of applicants and invitation to submit a full proposal:
March 2022
- Deadline for submitting invited full proposals (2nd stage):
July 2022
- Review meeting, including presentations by applicants:
September 2022
- Decisions on full proposals by the Foundation's Board of Trustees on recommendations of the review panel, project funding award:
Late November 2022

The following **review criteria** will be considered:

- Transformative potential of the project, convincing concept for knowledge production and transfer, intended outcome and impact
- Novelty, overall quality and feasibility of the proposal
- Convincing theoretical framework and coherent methodology (and its critical reflection)
- Quality of intended cooperation (partnership of equals)
- Experience and skills of the applicants (especially regarding inter- and transdisciplinary research)

NOTE:

In general, it is not possible to give detailed feedback on those pre-proposals that were not successful.

The Foundation will not process applications that have been submitted to another funding institution in identical or similar form. Applications that do not follow the formal requirements are likewise excluded from the review process.

No applicant may be involved in more than one proposal.

Grants can be awarded to universities and research institutions only. Applicants working outside of universities and well-known research institutions are asked to provide details on the legal status, statutes, trustees and boards, charitable/non-profit status, budgeting, and auditing of the institution to be funded. An annual report of the applying institution should also be included.

5 CHECKLIST AND GENERAL CONDITIONS

Please submit your pre-proposal using the electronic application system.

Applications must be submitted via the [electronic application system](#) of the Volkswagen Foundation. Please familiarise yourself with the system prior to the deadline. The Foundation expects that applications are submitted jointly by all collaborating academic partners. To this end, all applicants (main applicant and co-applicants) have to be registered in the system.

With your submission, you need to provide the following information in the form provided: Full name and office address of the applicants, intended grant administrator (institution of the applicant in Germany), and brief information on the project. You are also required to fill in a budget form: Please use this only for the preparatory funds (in case you require these; up to 10.000 EUR).

Additionally, the following documents need to be uploaded as pdf-attachments:

- Proposal description, max. 15.000 characters (please use the [templates available as download \(ZIP\)](#) on the website of the Volkswagen Foundation) including:
 - › Motivation, research idea, objectives
 - › Theoretical framework and methodological approach
 - › Mode of cooperation, division of tasks, expected synergies
 - › Expected results, potential impact
 - › Short outline of the work plan (both prep. phase and project phase)
 - › List of referenced literature
- Self-assessment sheet (see [templates, ZIP](#))
- Basic budget for the project phase (see [templates, ZIP](#))
- Short CV's of all applicants (1 page each)
- Short budget justification (for the preparatory funds)

Instructions for the 2nd stage applications will be communicated to the selected applicants with the invitation to submit a full proposal.

6 CONTACT AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For administrative questions and telephone appointments
with the program directors:

Daniela Grages

grages@volkswagenstiftung.de, +49 (0)511 83 81 257

For email inquiries with the program directors

Dr. Silke Bertram and Dr. Matthias Nöllenburg:

pandemics@volkswagenstiftung.de

Additional Information

- › [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\) \(pdf\)](#)
- › [Personnel Rates Scientific Personnel \(pdf\)](#) (Germany)
- › [Link to Funding Initiative Webpage](#)

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](#)". Please also read the responses to the "[Frequently Asked Questions](#)" thoroughly as they are part of the call.