

# Basic Information



A Foundation  
of Knowledge



Volkswagen **Stiftung**



Young academics in international projects mutually benefit from joint research and training.

## “A Foundation of Knowledge”

The Volkswagen Foundation has been supporting the humanities and social sciences as well as science and technology in higher education and research for more than half a century. We provide funding in Germany and abroad for projects in selected fields of study.

## An Independent Foundation

Contrary to what one might assume, the Volkswagen Foundation is in no way affiliated to the automobile manufacturer of the same name. Located in Hanover, Germany, it is an independent non-profit foundation established under private law. The funds allocated by the Foundation are generated from its capital and assets of currently about 3.2 billion euros. These funds are supplemented by profit entitlements accruing from 30 million Volkswagen shares held in trust by the Federal State of Lower Saxony (mainly dividends).

## A Flexible Partner

The Foundation sees itself as a flexible partner in the national and international research arena ready to support bold ideas. It constantly updates the focus of its funding portfolio to embrace newly emerging and promising lines of research and pioneering methods. The Foundation also contributes towards structural improvements in the areas of research and training. It perceives a special mission in promoting early-career scholars and scientists, not only in Germany. Via a regionally focused funding scheme called “Niedersächsisches Vorab” support is given to academic institutions in the state of Lower Saxony. As always the case, within the portfolio of respective funding activities, the decision to award grants lies with the Foundation’s Board of Trustees.

## A Palace in the Service of Scholarly Exchange

Since 2013 the Volkswagen Foundation has been holding its international conferences and public events in the Herrenhausen Palace Conference Center in Hanover. Proposals from academia for symposia and conferences furthering discourses on current research issues in an interdisciplinary and international context are welcome. The Foundation’s public events aim at strengthening the bond between academia and society at large.

## Submitting Applications

As a rule, applications can only be submitted within the framework of currently running funding initiatives and calls. Applications from research institutions outside Germany must also refer to one of these schemes and contain evidence of an existing cooperation agreement with scholars or scientists in Germany. Under certain circumstances funding may be provided for exceptional projects not covered by any of the funding initiatives. In such cases applicants should first contact the Foundation and supply a short outline of their idea.

## Review Process

Grants are awarded on the basis of recommendations made by external reviewers. In general several experts are asked to review a proposal, according to the research field(s) in question. In some of its schemes the Foundation appoints interdisciplinary review panels for the comparative assessment of the applications.

The international and interdisciplinary context is vital for scholarly and scientific activities funded by the Foundation.



## From Our Funding Portfolio



### Persons and Structures

Lichtenberg Endowed Professorships

'Freigeist' Fellowships

Momentum

Opus Magnum

World Knowledge – Structural Support for  
“Rare Subjects”

University of the Future



### Challenges – for Academia and Society

Artificial Intelligence and the Society of the Future

Life? – A Fresh Scientific Approach to the Basic  
Principles of Life

“Original – isn't it?” New Options for the Humanities  
and Cultural Studies

Experiment! – In Search of Bold Research Ideas

Symposia and Summer Schools



### International Focus

Challenges for Europe

Global Issues – Integrating Different Perspectives

Between Europe and the Orient – A Focus on Re-  
search and Higher Education in/on Central Asia  
and the Caucasus

Knowledge for Tomorrow – Cooperative Research  
Projects in Sub-Saharan Africa

Post-doctoral Fellowships in the Humanities at  
Universities and Research Institutes in Germany  
and the U.S.



### Off the Beaten Track



### Priority for Lower Saxony (“Niedersächsisches Vorab”)



### Communicating Science and Scholarship

For information on all funding schemes please visit  
our website. News on the funding portfolio are also  
published in our (German) newsletter:  
[www.volkswagenstiftung.de/newsletter-  
anmeldung](http://www.volkswagenstiftung.de/newsletter-anmeldung)

## The Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees comprises 14 members, of whom seven are appointed by the Federal Government, and seven by the Government of the Federal State of Lower Saxony. They are appointed for five-year terms of office. The Board of Trustees is bound only by the statutes of the Foundation.

Dr. Gabriele Heinen-Kljajić (Chairperson), former Minister for Science and Culture of Lower Saxony (2013-2017)

Dr. Georg Schütte (Vice Chairperson), State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of Education and Research

Professor Dr. Stefan Treue (Vice Chairperson), Director of the German Primate Center, Göttingen

Professor Dr. Cornelia Denz, Director of the Institute of Applied Physics, WWU Münster, Germany; Professor of Experimental Physics and Gender Research in Physics

Professor Dr.-Ing. Heinz Jörg Fuhrmann, Chairperson of the Executive Board of the Salzgitter AG, Salzgitter

Professor Dietmar Harhoff, Ph.D., Director at the Max Planck Institute for Innovation and Competition; Honorary Professor at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich

Professor Dr.-Ing. Jürgen Lehold, Director AutoUni, Volkswagen AG, Wolfsburg

Thomas Oppermann, Vice President German Bundestag

Professor Dr. Jürgen Osterhammel, Chair of Modern and Contemporary History, University of Konstanz

Professor Dr. Antje Schwalb, Head of the Institute of Geosystem and Bioindication, Technische Universität Braunschweig

Professor Dr. Heike Solga, Director of the research unit “Skill Formation and Labor Markets”, WZB – Berlin Social Science Center; Professor of Sociology, Freie Universität Berlin

Michael Sommer, former Chairperson of the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB / 2002-2014), Berlin

Professor Dr. Beate Söntgen, Vice President of Research and Humanities of Leuphana University Lüneburg; Professor of Art History

Professor Dr. Waltraud Wende, former Minister of Education and Science of Schleswig-Holstein (2012-2014)

## History

The Federal Republic of Germany and the Federal State of Lower Saxony set up the Volkswagen Foundation as an independent foundation with legal statutes under civil law in 1961. It started activities in 1962. It is not affiliated to Volkswagen AG, the automobile manufacturer, as its name might imply.

The name and purpose of the Foundation are to be seen in the context of the special situation in post-war Germany. A treaty between the Federal State of Lower Saxony and the Federal Government concluded in 1959 settled the unresolved ownership status of the Volkswagen automobile manufacturer, then known as Volkswagenwerk GmbH, which had been in dispute after 1945. Concurrently it was agreed to establish a foundation with the purpose of supporting science and research.

The Volkswagenwerk GmbH was turned into a joint stock company. 60 percent of its share capital was transferred to private ownership, while the Federal Government and Lower Saxony retained shares in the order of 20 per cent each. The proceeds from this privatization and the profit entitlements from the shares now held by the Federal Government and Lower Saxony were transferred to the newly founded “Stiftung Volkswagenwerk”, as it was known until 1989. The idea behind this was to create a strong independent institution in the still young Federal Republic to support science, scholarship, and technology in research and higher education.

## The Foundation's Offices

About 100 people work at the Foundation's offices in Hanover. They prepare resolutions of the Board of Trustees and execute its decisions. The executive management of the Foundation lies in the hands of a Secretary General appointed by the Board of Trustees.

### Secretary General

Dr. Wilhelm Krull (-215)

### Funding

Member of the Executive Management:

Dr. Henrike Hartmann (-376)

### Investment

Member of the Executive Management:

Dieter Lehmann (-351)

### Finance and Administration

Member of the Executive Management:

Henning Otto (-219)

### Communication

Head:

Jens Rehländer (-380)

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