

## 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) until 31 December 2019

Dr. Georg Schütte (-215) from 1 January 2020

### 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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Kastanienallee 35  
30519 Hannover  
Germany

Phone +49(0)5 11/83 81-0

Fax +49(0)5 11/83 81-344

mail@volkswagenstiftung.de  
www.volkswagenstiftung.de



## 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.

Björn Thümler (Chairperson), Minister of Science and Culture of Lower Saxony

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Professor Dr. Beate Söntgen, Professor of Art History, Leuphana University Lüneburg

Hiltrud Werner, Member of the Management Board, Volkswagen Group, Integrity and Legal Affairs

## 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.

## Basic Information



A Foundation  
of Knowledge

Photos: Christian Burkert (title); Gordon Welters (inside top); Mathias Schumacher (inside below)



VolkswagenStiftung



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

Change of Course – Exploring New Research Territories between the Life Sciences and Science or Engineering

Symposia and Summer Schools



#### International Focus

Challenges for Europe

Global Issues – Integrating Different Perspectives

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

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



#### Off the Beaten Track



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



#### Science Communication and Knowledge Transfer

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