

## Brief Profile of the Volkswagen Foundation

Contrary to what the name implies, the Volkswagen Foundation is not a corporate foundation. Located in Hanover, it is a completely independent non-profit foundation established under private law. With an annual funding volume of around 190 million euros it is among one of Europe's largest foundations, and it is the largest private research funding foundation in Germany. The funds allocated by the Foundation are generated from its capital and assets of currently about 2.9 billion euros. These funds are supplemented by profit entitlements accruing from Volkswagen AG shares held in trust by the Federal State of Lower Saxony (mainly dividends).

The Volkswagen Foundation supports the humanities and social sciences as well as science and technology in higher education and research. Since the start of funding activities in 1962 it has granted 4.2 billion euros in support of over 30,000 projects.

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# L(i)fe=?

A Fresh Scientific  
Approach to the Basic  
Principles of Life



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## Thematic Scope

“What is life?” – humans have been posing this question for centuries. Recently, though, research fields have emerged at the interface between the natural and the life sciences that provide completely new insights into this scientific ‘grand challenge’. For instance, research fields like systems biology, synthetic biology, cell biology, xenobiology, but also artificial intelligence or robotics open up new approaches for investigating the basic principles of life. Moreover, new analytical and technical methods allow more profound access to an understanding of what actually constitutes life.

The Foundation’s funding initiative “Life? – A fresh scientific approach to the basic principles of life” offers support for pioneering research projects located at the intersection between the natural and the life sciences. The initiative addresses researchers whose innovative projects hold promise of achieving advances in respect of a scientific understanding of characteristic facets of life.

## Target Group and Scope of Funding

Applications for funding are invited from researchers at all stages of their post-doctoral and professorial career. Funding can be made available both for single principal investigator projects as well as for integrative cooperation projects with or without international participation. The funding period may be **up to five years** and in an amount of **1.5 million euros**. The project design in respect to the research question, methods, and type of project is open and can be progressively determined in accordance with the project requirements. A core requirement is that the research question addresses the basic principles of life and is located at the interface between the natural and the life sciences.

## Selection Process

Applications for funding are assessed in a two-stage procedure: Initially the Foundation will accept only project outlines which will be reviewed by the Foundation as well as an interdisciplinary panel of international experts. In case of a positive result, applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal followed by a presentation of the proposed project to a panel of experts at the Volkswagen Foundation’s offices in Hanover, Germany.

You can find more information on this funding initiative, details on how to apply, and deadlines under [www.volkswagenstiftung.de/en/life](http://www.volkswagenstiftung.de/en/life).