

FAQs “Challenges for Europe” – Projects (Pre-proposals)

For the general application FAQs of the Volkswagen Foundation, [click here](#).

For FAQs for Applicants from Abroad, [click here](#).

1. Eligibility of applicants

What is meant by “European partner(s)”?

The call is not limited to applicants from EU member states. Instead, “Europe” is defined geographically, so that scholars from e.g. Great Britain, Norway, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, and Russia can also be part of the research consortia.

Can non-European partners/non-academic actors participate in the projects?

They may be cooperation partners but cannot receive funding, this means he or she cannot act as PI.

How many applicants can be registered in the electronic application system?

A maximum of five persons acting as PIs in the project may be registered.

Who is eligible to receive funding?

Scholars at all career levels post-Ph.D. in the humanities, cultural and social sciences working at European universities and research institutions are eligible to apply. Scholars from other disciplines .g. data or life sciences may be involved in the projects where appropriate.

Are NGOs and think tanks eligible to receive funding?

Grants can only be awarded to universities and research institutions. Criteria for being classified as a research institution include the following: The institution 1) pursues science and research according to its statutes, 2) employs academic staff, and 3) produces scientific output (scientific articles, monographs etc.).

In case of doubt, please contact the Foundation well ahead of your application.

Is there a limit regarding the number of submissions from one institution?

There are no limits regarding the number of submissions made by one institution.

Who can apply?

Every applicant must at least hold a PhD and must be affiliated to an academic institution (at the latest by the time when starting the research project).

In case a member of the research consortium is currently not employed at a university or research institution, a letter by the institution the scholar intends to work at needs to be included (at the stage of full proposals) in which the institution affirms its willingness to manage the grant and provide work space for the scholar. In the pre-proposal, the respective scholars should only mention the institution where he/she wants to pursue the research project.

Does a full professor have better chances than a postdoc when applying as PI?

No. The review panel judges all pre-proposals according to their originality, innovativeness, and feasibility.

Is it possible to be part of more than one project/working group in this call?

It is generally possible for one applicant to be part of two projects. However, in the application it needs to be explained in which way that person would be involved in each project and if he/she has sufficient time to work on both projects in case that both will be selected for funding.

Is it possible to submit more than one application to the Foundation?

Within the initiative “Challenges for Europe”: see previous question.

Regarding other funding initiatives: Yes. In this case, the person also needs to explain, whether an involvement in different projects is feasible in case of a positive funding decision.

What is the difference between “applicant” and “grant recipient”?

Applicants are the leading researchers within a project.

Grant recipients are the universities and research institutions that will – in case of a positive funding decision – receive and administer the funds. The Foundation grants money to institutions only, not to private individuals.

2. Budget

Which costs can be funded?

All project costs which are directly related to the project can be funded:

Personnel expenses: for doctoral students and junior postdocs (up to 5 years after PhD), student and research assistants, non-scientific personnel (a part-time administrative staff member at the main applicant’s institution).

Please note: only if a PI falls into the category of “junior researcher” (up to 5 years after PhD) can the position be included in the budget. It is possible to also include the position for an academic project coordinator (max. 50% equivalent TV-L 13, also possible for non-junior postdocs).

For staff costs in Germany see: https://www.volkswagenstiftung.de/sites/default/files/downloads/Personalmittelsaetze_wissenschaftliche_Mitarbeiter.pdf

Personnel expenses in other countries must be calculated according to local rates.

Recurring non-personnel costs: e.g. travel costs, accommodation, workshops, conferences, catering, rental of rooms and technical equipment (for project meetings and workshops only), translations, transcriptions, service contracts (related to the project)

Non-recurrent expenses: e.g. printing subsidies (for publications), acquisition of data and literature, surveys, science communication.

May the proposed budget plan include both full-time and part-time research posts?

Yes. Please briefly point out the percentage of each position.

How should positions for PhDs and postdocs be budgeted?

In general, PhD positions should be budgeted for a minimum of three years and may be budgeted for a duration of up to four years (for doctoral students in the humanities, cultural or social sciences usually 65 % TV-L 13). In the pre-proposal, it has to be explained how the junior scholars are involved in the project and how their qualification is ensured both financially and organizationally.

Can postdocs acting as PIs apply for their own position?

Yes, in the case of junior postdocs (up to 5 years after PhD, see “Personnel expenses” above). However, the postdoc needs to ensure that the institution he/she intends to work at when implementing the project is willing to administer the funds and to provide adequate workspace. Brief information on such prior agreements should be given in the pre-proposal (project description).

Will personnel expenses for senior researchers be funded?

In general, senior partners may include some budget for longer stays at their partner institutions in the form of, for instance, replacements for sabbaticals or short-term teaching buy-outs (usually for a teaching buy-out up to 20% of the regular teaching load or up to 6 months for a sabbatical). A top-up for senior researchers from European countries with significant lower wages can be considered and is up to approval.

Will administrative positions be funded?

Funds to finance part-time administrative positions or, alternatively, part-time positions for researchers tasked with the coordination of the project may be included in the budget to a reasonable extent.

Will science communication measures be funded?

Project teams may apply for funds to cover science communication measures (beyond classic academic output such as knowledge dissemination and public engagement activities) and stakeholder involvement.

Which institution will manage the grant?

Funds will be granted to the institution of the main applicant, which will manage the budget and transfer money to the partner institutions.

Will overhead costs be covered?

No, the Foundation does not cover overhead expenses. It only fund those costs that are directly related to the project.

Is there a budget plan template?

No, we do not provide budget templates. Please create your own budget plans with the following positions included: personnel costs (based on local standards; divided in academic and non-academic personnel), recurring non-personnel costs (travel costs, consumables etc.) and non-recurrent expenses (technical equipment/acquisition of data, science and communication measures and costs for outreach activities).

Can the budget of the pre-proposal be modified in the full proposal?

Yes, budget plans may be changed when submitting the full proposal. The Foundation reserves the right to adjust/adapt budget plans.

3. Electronic Application System

Please note: Further information on the application system are provided on our homepage: <https://portal.volkswagenstiftung.de/vwsantrag/login.do?siteLanguage=en>

Registration of applicants/

Please note, that all applicants (**main applicant and co-applicants**) have to be registered in the electronic application system and that it is necessary for the co-applicants to accept the invitation.

Time of deadline

2:00 pm