

FUNDING INITIATIVE

Symposia

Call for Proposals

Thematic Week: Failure Matters – Dimensions of ‘Failure’ in Science

December 12 – 14, 2022

Profile Area “Exploration”

Deadline: May 18, 2022



1 OBJECTIVE

Has someone failed if an experiment does not produce the desired result? The Volkswagen Foundation's clear answer: no! Because without error, there would be no new knowledge. Without making mistakes, there would be no progress. However, creative failure has no lobby in the international science system. Being forced to meet short-term expectations, to acquire third-party funding and to produce a steady stream of papers, many researchers shy away from time-consuming experiments with uncertain outcomes. As a result, mainstream research is booming, the willingness to take risks is declining, and scientific progress is stagnating.

But what does "failure" actually mean in the various scientific disciplines? How much risk taking does the science system accept, how much failure can a still young career take, and how can new scope be opened up? What are the challenges of interdisciplinary research or cooperation with international partners? What role do funding bodies and science policy play? What do innovative funding formats of the future look like?

Against this background, the Volkswagen Foundation will host a thematic symposium week on the topic "Failure Matters – Dimensions of 'Failure' in Science" from December 12 to 14, 2022 at the conference center Herrenhausen Palace in Hanover. Applications shall refer to symposia that work out and discuss what it means to take risks and possibly fail. The focus of a symposium can be on the researcher as an individual or on a scientific discipline, but it can also take into account the challenges arising from interdisciplinary research or the cooperation with international partners.

The Foundation especially encourages an exchange that goes beyond a purely scientific perspective by also involving actors from other relevant fields such as politics, science funding or science management. Foundation representatives will follow the discussions closely and enter into dialogue with participants of various disciplines in order to generate possible guidelines for the Foundation's funding activities. There will therefore be several overarching slots for exchange and networking, to which the participants of all symposia are invited.

2 APPLICATION PROCESS

The call for proposals for the Thematic Week “Failure Matters” is being held as part of the “Symposia” funding initiative of the Volkswagen Foundation. It is planned to fund a total of three to four symposia during one week from December 12 to 14, 2022.

Please refer to the specifications of the funding initiative “Symposia” for general conditions as well as information on the application and review procedures and use the templates provided for this initiative. Links to the corresponding documents can be found in section 3 as well as on the initiative’s webpage.

In addition to the general requirements of the funding initiative “Symposia”, applicants are requested to include into their program the following slots, which should serve the exchange and networking of the participants of all symposia with each other and with representatives of the Foundation:

- 12 December, 11:00 to 12:00 (joint welcome),
- 12 December, from 18:00 (organized by the Volkswagen Foundation),
- 13 December, from 16:00 (organized by the Volkswagen Foundation),
- 14 December, 14:00 to 15:00 (joint closing)

3 CONTACT AND FURTHER INFORMATION

Information

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Further Information

- [Webpage Thematic Week „Failure Matters“](#)
- [Webpage „Symposia“](#)
- [Information for Applicants 01a „Symposia“](#)
- [Template Proposal \(Download\)](#)
- [Application FAQs](#)
- [Electronic Application System – Instruction and Tips](#)
- [VolkswagenFoundation Electronic Application System](#)