

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

Deadline: [see website](#)

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I. Objectives

Novel methodic approaches located at the interface between the natural and life sciences have blurred the formerly clear distinction between living organisms and non-living chemical and physical systems. The rapid developments within this multi-disciplinary border area urge us to reconsider questions related to the principles of life.

Via this funding initiative the Foundation aims to encourage and support **projects that contribute to comprehending fundamental principles of life**. Funding can be made available for projects that link up most recent research from the interface between the natural and life sciences promising to achieve significant progress in answering fundamental questions on life itself.

Amongst others, the Foundation will consider approaches from **Synthetic, Systems or Cell Biology, Xenobiology** as well as **Biophysics, Prebiotic Chemistry** or similar research areas. The main focus of the proposals should be to connect excellent research in the natural and life sciences with the aim to reveal fundamental characteristics of life. Projects dealing with basic biomedical research or treatment of diseases as well as the establishment of biomedical methods are not part of this initiative's scope. The Volkswagen Foundation focuses exclusively on the natural and life sciences in order to complement philosophic conceptualizations of life with new scientific perspectives.

II. Funding Opportunities

The initiative addresses both **individual** researchers as well as **integrative joint projects** with up to five cooperation partners. Projects can be funded with **up to 1.5 million euros** over a funding period of **up to 5 years**. Applicants are free to choose the question dealt with, the form the project should take or the methods applied, always provided that the project is located at the interface between the natural and life sciences and addresses specific questions concerning fundamental principles of life.

Topics that could be supported within other institutions' funding frames, for example Priority Programs and Collaborative Research Centers supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) as well as centers of excellence or funding calls of the Federal Ministries or the EU are excluded from funding. The Foundation allocates only direct project costs and does not provide funds for institutional overheads.

III. General Conditions

Applicants conforming to the following conditions are eligible:

- Researchers of all stages of their postdoctoral career
- At least one of the applicants has to be employed at a scientific institution in Germany being substantially involved in the project – content related as well as financially.
- Applications for joint projects should name a lead applicant in Germany responsible for correspondence and reporting.

IV. Application and Selection Procedure

Applications will be processed in a two-stage review: initially the Foundation will accept only **project outlines** which will undergo an internal examination on formal criteria. These outlines will be subsequently reviewed by an interdisciplinary panel of international experts with regard to their scientific quality and relevance for the initiative. On this basis, proposals will be preselected and successful applicants will then be invited to submit a **full proposal** in connection with a **personal presentation** of their project in front of the panel at the Volkswagen Foundation's offices. The Foundation aims for a peer review and decision making period of approximately 10 months.

Involvement of applicants in more than one proposal outline is not possible. The Volkswagen Foundation can award grants only to scientific institutions.

V. Instructions for Submission and Structure of Proposal Outlines

Please submit your project outline electronically and in English through our Electronic Application System. Project partners have to be "invited" to the electronic system. Information on all applicants and institutions can be directly provided online. The following documents are required as single PDF files:

- **Proposal outline** (max. 6 pages incl. references, Arial 11 pt font); **Please use the template** (available as download on the website or via link below)
 - Project title
 - Keywords characterizing the scope of the proposal (max. 5)
 - Applicants (title, name, institution)
 - Scientific project summary (approx. 200 words)
 - Lay summary (approx. 200 words)
 - Project objective (incl. expected contribution to the understanding of the principles of life)
 - Current status of the research area
 - Description of the project (incl. methods and working plan outline)
 - References
- **Brief budget** in tabular form for each applicant
- **Short CV** of each applicant (max. 2 pages incl. a list of up to 10 most relevant or project related publications)

Please inform yourself about the electronic application system of the Volkswagen Foundation prior to submitting your application. Information can be found in the document 'Electronic Application System – Instructions and Tips'.

Contact

Dr. Pavel Dutow

Phone: +49 511 8381-397

Fax: +49 511 8381-4397

e-mail: dutow@volkswagenstiftung.de

VolkswagenStiftung

Kastanienallee 35

30519 HANNOVER

GERMANY

www.volkswagenstiftung.de/en

Additional Information

General links

[Electronic Application System](#)

[Electronic Application System – Instructions and Tips](#)

[Applications FAQs](#)

[FAQs for Applicants from Abroad](#)

[Salaries for Academic Staff](#)

[Salaries for Non-Academic Staff](#)

About 'Life?'

[Website funding initiative 'Life?'](#)

[Projects granted](#)

[Template Proposal Outline](#)

Module: Science Communication and Knowledge Transfer

The Volkswagen Foundations offers funding for science communication and knowledge transfer both as an additional part of new proposals and for projects that currently receive funding from the Foundation. This measure aims to support communication formats between academics and non-academics (citizens, journalists, professional communicators etc.). Applicants should always contact the program director in charge before submitting their proposal. For further information about all funding opportunities within the context of science communication, see

www.volkswagenstiftung.de/en/sciencecommunication.