

Call for Proposals

International Research in Computational Social Sciences

Application deadline

15 June 2016

Contact

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1. Objectives

In recent years, what has come to be termed the “digitalization” of society has led to fundamental social, political, and economic changes. The “digital revolution” has also had significant effects on social research, as the development and usage of new media devices and technologies has generated an abundance of data about human behavior. On the one hand, this opens up new opportunities for social science research; on the other hand, it also involves methodological and methodical challenges: While the mere existence and use of digital media generates new and interesting questions to be explored, the new (and extremely) huge data sets simultaneously throw into question existing empirical methods and their suitability as tools of analysis. It is these developments and the corresponding challenges for social science research that are at the heart of the area of “Computational Social Sciences”. This area is understood as a specialization within the Social Sciences, which is considerably concerned with the analysis of large data sets and the development of appropriate methods and tools to do so.

This call aims at supporting the further development of this thematic field and, more specifically, at encouraging junior scholars to explore socially relevant problems by using computer-aided methods. The Foundation explicitly aims at supporting the development and strengthening of international networks between scholars working in this field based in Germany and abroad as well as the further training of junior researchers – from the level of Master’s to postdoc.

This call addresses scholars who are either working in the thematic area of “Computational Social Sciences” or who wish to specialize within this field. The call invites proposals for scholarly events and research projects that address socially relevant problems and questions – in particular those questions that can now be explored either by using computer-aided methods or via access to new digital data sets, and that use a fresh perspective. Another focus is on the development of theories and methods: Can, for example, existing theories and methods from the (quantitative) social sciences be utilized in the area of “Computational Social Sciences”? If so, how? Simultaneously, it is equally important to gain more fundamental knowledge about both the structure and form of existing data sets to assess their relevance for future research.

Excluded from funding are projects that were merely designed due to the availability of and access to electronic data or to apply certain algorithms, but which do not address socially relevant questions.

2. Funding Opportunities

This call consists of two funding lines: the first line offers opportunities to fund international workshops and summer schools as well as series of summer schools. The second line offers funding for international research cooperation between postdoctoral scholars.

Funding line 1: Scholarly Meetings

Any proposed event – workshops or summer schools – should be designed and orientated internationally and (if possible) address scholars from different disciplines. In addition, an active involvement of junior scholars from both Germany as well as abroad is required.

Applications can either be made for individual or a series of up to three summer schools. Summer schools conducted as part of a series need to be thematically linked; at least one of the summer schools should be held abroad – possibly outside of Europe. Participants (especially junior scholars) should be enabled to take part in several summer schools within a series. To strengthen the transnational character of these events and allow for novel perspectives, the Foundation encourages the cooperation with, and involvement of, transatlantic or Asian partners.

The Foundation also encourages the use of innovative formats or new instruments/tools to support the interaction of participants.

Applications can be submitted by both established (senior) as well as junior scholars; however, the main applicant needs to be based at a German institution. Summer schools or workshops can also be applied for in cooperation with partners from abroad. These partners then need to register as “co-applicants”.

Finances

Within this line, funding will be provided for:

- Personnel expenses for the organization and realization of the meeting(s) (research or student assistants)
- Travel and accommodation costs for all participants
- Publications
- Consumables
- Non-recurring non-personnel costs (to be justified)

The budget for a series of up to three summer schools is limited to 250,000 EUR.

Funding Line 2: International Cooperation of Postdoctoral Scholars

This funding line is directed at postdoctoral researchers who wish to strengthen (or develop) their thematic and methodological expertise. Candidates should have finished their PhD no more than three years ago.

A research team must include at least one social scientist. Depending on the problem and question to be explored, the team can also reflect a variety of disciplinary expertise (beyond the social sciences, too); the involvement of different disciplines (such as computer sciences, for instance) must be legitimized by the particular topic/research question.

Set-up (Personnel) and Duration

This line offers opportunities for funding for two to a maximum of four years. It is possible for two to four postdoctoral scholars to form a research consortium. The Foundation especially invites multilateral research groups with members in more than two countries. Furthermore, the Foundation encourages cooperation with partners from non-European countries (such as the transatlantic region or Asia). In exceptional cases, a bilateral cooperation of two postdocs based at German institutions as well as the involvement of more established (senior) researchers (yet, they cannot apply for any personnel expenditure) is also possible.

The involvement of a postdoctoral candidate based at a German institution is essential; this person needs to act as the main applicant of the project. Other partners can be registered as co-applicants.

Deadline networking
workshop

10 December 2015

Networking Opportunity

The Foundation is currently planning a networking workshop of three or four days to be held in Germany in **February/March 2016**. This workshop offers an opportunity for postdoctoral researchers interested in participating in a cooperative project to get to know and network with potential partners. The event will offer both thematic input as well as space to develop cooperative research ideas. Applications are welcome from postdoctoral candidates across the globe; however, the criteria for submitting a proposal with respect to the completion of the PhD must be fulfilled. The Foundation covers participation in the event as well as the cost of travel and accommodation. Details can be found via the following link:

www.volkswagenstiftung.de/en/computational-social-sciences.

The deadline for submitting short applications to participate in the workshop is **10 December 2015** (up to 2 pages on the personal motivation to participate and CV). Suitable candidates will then receive their official invitation in January 2016. It is only with this invitation that the cost of travel and accommodation will be covered.

Participation in this workshop does in no way affect the chances of succeeding in acquiring a grant for a cooperative project; neither is it a

prerequisite for submitting an application under funding line 2 (with deadline on 15 June 2016).

Finances

Depending on the set-up of the team and the project's duration, projects can be funded with up to 600,000 to 800,000 EUR (in exceptional cases, up to one million EUR can be provided). The budget can cover personnel as well as non-personnel expenses (as follows):

- Personnel expenses for all postdoctoral researchers involved; for up to four years
- Travel and accommodation costs (this may also include visits to and research stays at the respective partner institution)
- Funds for the organization of joint events
- Consumables
- Other non-recurring non-personnel expenses
- Publication costs
- Funds for technical support (e.g. programming of certain applications)

4. Review Process

The deadline for applications is **15 June 2016**.

Applications must be submitted in English, as they will be assessed by an international review panel. Final decisions on the proposals are expected to be made and communicated towards the end of 2016.

5. Further Information

The Foundation is unable to process applications that have been submitted in identical or similar form to any other funding body. Moreover, financial commitments made prior to receipt of a grant letter cannot be covered.

The Volkswagen Foundation can award grants to academic institutions in Germany only. Applicants outside of universities and well-known research institutions need to provide details on the legal status, statutes, trustees and boards, charitable/non-profit status, budgeting, and auditing of the institution to be able to receive funding.

6. How to Apply and Check-list

Applications must be submitted to the Volkswagen Foundation electronically via the online application system:
(<https://portal.volkswagenstiftung.de/vwsantrag/login.do?siteLanguage=en>).

On the system, you need to provide the following information:

Full name and office address of the main applicant(s), intended grant administrator (German research institution), **brief information on the**

Electronic application

Please use the Foundation's application system:
portal.volkswagenstiftung.de
for the electronic submission of your application. Please do not forget to print, sign and upload the scanned signature sheet. Instructions on the electronic application system are provided online.

project (brief informative title, duration, and total budget) as well as a **budget**.

In addition, the following information needs to be provided as “enclosures” (pdf-files):

For scholarly meetings (funding line 1):

- **Signature sheet** (with all relevant signatures) (generated on the electronic system as part of the online application)
- **Cover letter**
- **Summary** (up to 1 page, if possible in German and English)
- **Programme and list of participants**
- **Concept/Design, including:**
 - Research question(s)
 - State of the art
 - Plan for actively involving junior scholars
 - Information on the selection of participants
 - Reference list

For cooperative projects (funding line 2):

- **Signature sheet** (with all relevant signatures) (generated on the electronic system as part of the online application)
- **Cover letter**
- **Summary** (up to 1 page, if possible in German and English)
- **Description of the research project** (up to 7,000 words):
 - Research subject
 - State of the art
 - Aims of the project and research questions
 - Contribution to knowledge
 - Theoretical framework
 - Methods
 - Relevant data sets
 - Reference list (not part of the word count)
- **Work plan and timeline**, including information on the organisation of the group
- **Budget** in EUR, subdivided into
 - Personnel expenses
 - Non-personnel expenses (e.g. cost of travel and accommodation as well as other recurring non-personnel expenses)
 - Publication costs
 - Equipment and literature, licenses for programs
 - Programming of technical applications
- **CVs, list of relevant publications** (max. 3 page per partner for publications)
- Statement of support by the German research institution, including the financial administration of all funds provided [see additional form]
- If the main applicant anticipates to be affiliated with a different academic institution based in Germany, the Foundation also requires

a statement by this institution confirming the willingness to hire the applicant and host the project. All partners based abroad can submit a confirmation of their institutional affiliation in case of a grant.

7. Electronic Application – Instruction and Tips

Please note that you (and your partner(s)) need to register on the electronic application system to be able to submit an application and have access to application data. It is required for all applicants to register themselves (instructions are also provided on the system).

Please follow these steps to compile and submit your application:

If you are a new user, please register on the application portal with your name, your e-mail address, and a password. When registering, you will be asked the details of your work address. Subsequently, you must activate your account using the link sent to you by e-mail. If you already have an account, you can immediately login using your e-mail address and password.

Via the button “new application”, you can select the relevant funding initiative (“International Research in Computational Social Sciences”) and begin the application process.

- Please fill in the required fields and forms.
- Remember to read and accept the legal statement. If you wish, you can generate a PDF of the complete application for verification and your files.
- Under the button “other enclosures”, you are able to upload files as required according to the checklist on the preceding page. The detailed budget should also be uploaded here. Only PDF files are accepted.
- Additionally, it is required to generate a signature sheet for print-out. Instructions are provided on the system. Please do not forget to print, sign, scan, and upload your signature sheet.

Please note that the “save”-button does not transfer any data to the Foundation. You are able to revise all data until final submission and can interrupt the application process at any time as often as required. Once your application is completed, you can submit it electronically.

In the course of processing your application, the Foundation might request additional information. The button “new supplement” is used to upload and submit these respective files.