



FAQs “Challenges for Europe”

1. Pre-proposal in general

What kind of challenges should be addressed?

The Foundations call for (pre-) proposals that deal with challenges which cause severe frictions among European states, threaten Europe’s inner cohesion, and can only be addressed collectively at the European level.

Global challenges that can only be dealt with at the international level (e. g. climate change) are not part of this call.

What is the main purpose of the pre-proposal?

As the pre-proposal is relatively short, its primary purpose is to get the reviewers interested in the project and to convince them of the originality, innovativeness, and feasibility of the project.

Can further attachments be added to the pre-proposal?

The pre-proposals must not exceed 5 pages and 17,000 characters. Please do not add further attachments such as tables, graphs, and CVs. Those are required for the full proposals only. Given the international orientation of this program, the application needs to be submitted in English.

2. 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 participate in the projects?

Non-European partners may be cooperation partners but they cannot receive funding.

How many applicants should 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 in the humanities, cultural and social sciences working at European universities and research institutions are eligible to apply. Scholars from other disciplines may be involved in the projects if 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 Foundations well ahead of your application.

Is there a limit regarding the number of applicants 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 (or have equivalent academic experience) 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 Foundations?

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 scientists 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 Foundations grant money to institutions only, not to private individuals.



3. 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 postdocs (positions and scholarships), student and research assistants, non-scientific personnel (only in well justified cases in which administrative assistance cannot be provided otherwise).

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.

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. 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. 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.

Will administrative positions be funded?

Funds to finance part-time administrative positions or, alternatively, top-up salaries for junior 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 academic output such as knowledge dissemination and public engagement activities) and stakeholder involvement; however, this merely relates to non-personnel expenses.

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 Foundations do not cover overhead expenses. They only fund those costs that are directly related to the project,

Is there a budget plan template?

No, we do not provide budget templates.

Is funding tied to calendar years?

The allocated funding is neither tied to any particular financial year, nor does it expire at the end of a calendar year.

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 Foundations reserve the right to adjust/adapt budget plans.

4. 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 co-applicants

In order to generate a signature sheet with the names of all applicants, the main applicant needs to register in the electronic application system and invite the co-applicants (i.e. fellow PIs) via e-mail. Please note, that it is absolutely necessary for the co-applicants to accept the invitation. Otherwise, the signature sheet cannot be generated and the application cannot be submitted.

Time of deadline

11:59 pm