

CALL

CHALLENGES FOR EUROPE

Next Deadlines: 25 June 2020, 7 July 2021

PLEASE NOTE: NEW DEADLINE AND TIMELINE DUE TO CORONA CRISIS



area of research: humanities, cultural and social sciences



type of funding: international research projects



up to 1 million Euro for 3 partners, up to 1.5 million Euro for 5 partners



up to 4 years



research teams working on European challenges



consortia involving 3-5 principal investigators from at least 3 different European countries (main applicant has to be a member of a German university/research institution)



additional benefits: funding for communication of science and research



1 OBJECTIVES

„The power of the European idea remains strong. There is no challenge for Europe which cannot be overcome with this power.” (Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, 8 November 2019, at the anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.) In the face of several severe crises such as Brexit and the rise of nationalistic sentiments, the vision of Europe and its merits as a peacekeeping and open union without borders is more important than ever. As the last elections of the European Parliament showed, there is still a strong will for cooperation and mutual support amongst European countries.

To contribute to and enhance the future of the European vision, the Volkswagen Foundation started the initiative “Challenges for Europe” in 2017. Its aim is to stimulate basic research on issues affecting Europe and the European Union. The Foundation wants to enable research-based impulses for future cooperation within Europe, encourage comparative studies, and strengthen academic collaboration among European scholars.

2 FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

This call addresses the future of Europe and the changes the continent is undergoing. Therefore, it especially addresses current and systematically interrelated problems which can only be dealt with collectively at the European level. In two previous calls, the following challenges have already been identified: populism and democracy, migration and integration as well as disinformation in social media and economic inequalities (click [here](#) for the grants of the first two calls).

For this call the foundation is looking for curiosity-driven projects on challenges that have not been addressed yet and are just emerging. The call targets scholars in the humanities, cultural and social sciences who investigate current and long-term developments in Europe.

This includes both Europe as a geographical region and the European Union as a transnational entity. Furthermore, the theoretical and methodological analysis of best practice examples is also possible. While the disciplinary focus should be on the social and cultural sciences as well as the humanities, input from other disciplines is welcome wherever appropriate. All projects should address major challenges for Europe and/or the European Union. The originality and innovativeness of both the research question(s) and the methodology of the project have to be highlighted in the proposal. It is crucial that the projects go beyond an analysis of current problems and also consider its importance for the future viability of the European Union as well as future collaborations of European states. In addition, the consortia should consider the sustainability of their projects as well as new and creative ways to communicate the results to relevant stakeholders and/or the general public.

3 WHAT WE OFFER

Personnel

- Funding can be provided for closely interacting research consortia of up to five PIs/Partners coming from universities of at least three different countries in Europe. It is essential that the leading PI comes from a German institution. The inclusion of research institutions from Southern and Eastern Europe is particularly desirable
- Scholars at all career levels post-Ph.D. in the humanities, cultural and social sciences working at European universities and research institutes are eligible to apply.
- The further qualification of young scholars has to be a central element of each research project. The main share of the funds provided for staff must therefore be allocated to junior scholars (Ph.D. students and young postdocs). Junior scholars are here defined as being within 5 years from Ph.D.

Budget and Duration

- The project duration should be up to four years with a maximum gross budget of 1 million Euro for consortia of three PIs and up to 1.5 million Euro for consortia of five PIs per project.
- Funds can be made available for personnel (according to local standards and the regulations of the home institution; top-ups for senior researcher may be included and depend on approval) as well as non-personnel expenses, such as travel costs, consumables, acquisition of data, science communication measures, and equipment.
- Overhead costs will not be covered. However, funds to finance part time administrative support at the main-applicant's institution may be included in the budget to a reasonable extent as well as a lump sum for administrative costs of 10.000 EUR for the partners.
- With respect to the funds granted for non-personnel costs, the Foundation expects a relatively even distribution amongst the different partners

4 APPLICATION AND TIMELINE

Proposals are to be submitted in English. The application process will comprise two stages

- Applicants are first asked to hand in a 5-page pre-proposal outlining the research project.
- After an internal review regarding the formal criteria an international and interdisciplinary review panel will assess the pre-proposals with regard to their quality, potential, and originality.
- Shortlisted project consortia will be invited to turn in a full proposal and to present and defend their proposals in person at an interview with the review panel, after which the final decision will be made.
- Based on the experiences of the first rounds of applications, quite a high number of pre-proposals is expected. Therefore, it is not possible to give detailed feedback on those pre-proposals that were not successful in the first stage.

The following criteria are essential for the review process:

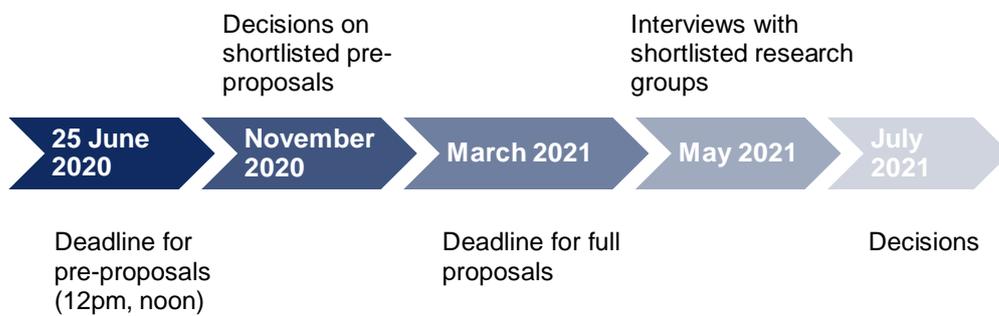
- innovative research question linked to Europe-wide problems
- top-of-the-shelve research
- clear methodology and strong theoretical framework
- high feasibility of the workplan
- partnerships at eyelevel
- strong capacity building/involvement of junior researchers
- convincing concept for dissemination/knowledge transfer to policy makers and/or the general public

Applications must be submitted via the electronic application system of the Volkswagen Foundation portal.volkswagenstiftung.de/ with all documents mentioned in section 5 (Checklist). The Foundation expects that applications are submitted jointly by all cooperating partners. Therefore, all applicants (main applicant and co-applicants) have to be registered in the electronic application system.

The Foundation will not process applications that have been submitted to another funding institution in identical or similar form.

Grants can be awarded to universities and research institutions only. Applicants working outside of universities and well-known research institutions are asked to provide details on the legal status, statutes, trustees and boards, charitable/non-profit status, budgeting, and auditing of the institution to be funded. An annual report of the applying institution should also be included.

NEW (ESTIMATED) TIMELINE



5 CHECKLIST AND GENERAL CONDITIONS

Please submit your pre-proposal using the electronic application system of the Volkswagen Foundation.

The following documents need to be uploaded as pdf-attachments:

- Summary of the project (max. 2,500 characters, incl. spaces, Arial 12)
- Description of proposed research project (max. 17,000 characters, incl. spaces/max. 5 pages), including the following information:
 - › aim of the project
 - › research questions
 - › theoretical base and methodological approach
 - › significance of the project for the research field “Challenges for Europe”
 - › participants and their tasks within the project
 - › organization of the group and expected synergies
 - › work plan (incl. Gantt chart)
- list of referenced literature (up to 1 page)
- Short CV’s of all team members (up to 2 pages each)
- budget in Euro (up to 1 page per budget plan)
 - › divided according to the working groups in the respective countries (i.e. one budget plan per country)
 - › divided into staff costs (research personnel, other personnel), recurring non-personnel costs (e.g. travel costs, consumables), and non-recurrent expenses (e.g. acquisition of data and literature, science communication measures)

6 CONTACT AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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Additional Information

- › [Application FAQs / Information for Applicants from Abroad](#)
- › [Frequently Asked Questions – “Challenges for Europe”](#)
- › [Electronic Application System – Instructions and Tips](#)
- › [Personnel Rates Scientific Personnel](#)
- › [Link to Webpage “Challenges for Europe”](#)

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”](#). Please also read the responses to the [“Frequently Asked Questions”](#) thoroughly as they are part of the call.