

Funding Initiative

Lichtenberg Endowed Professorships

Closing date: Applications can be submitted at any time

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I. Aim of the Initiative

Following a legislative reform, the framework conditions for the work of foundations in Germany have improved considerably. Removing the endowment ban has enabled foundations to provide assets to other tax-privileged entities, thus facilitating the creation of endowed professorships. Also in cooperation with other foundations, the *Stifterverband für die deutsche Wissenschaft* and the Volkswagen Foundation wish to support universities in gathering capital for the creation of additional professorships. With the “Lichtenberg Endowed Professorships”, the *Stifterverband für die deutsche Wissenschaft* and the Volkswagen Foundation seek to establish a new endowment funding instrument for the German university landscape.

The sustainable funding of outstanding researchers and their organizational units, in particular through the additionality of the endowed professorship, makes it possible to use the funding as a strategic instrument while at the same time providing planning security for both the institution as well as the professorship holder. It presents a great opportunity for the candidates to tackle highly innovative developments in current research areas, to define promising and risk-prone topics and, as far as possible, to develop them across disciplines and implement new teaching concepts. The universities are able to operate innovation and structural policies to a greater extent than before, with more independence and above all dependability. Moreover, they are incentivized to step up their efforts to acquire external funds. At the same time, the initiative sends a signal for more civic engagement in and for German universities.

II. Scope of Funding

The funding initiative is thematically open and aimed to an equal extent at disciplines in the humanities and social sciences as well as the natural and engineering sciences and medicine. The program is also open to researchers of all nationalities, the prerequisite being that the hosting institution is a university in Germany. In total, each professorship will be endowed with at least five million euro as endowment capital. The Volkswagen Foundation will provide a start capital of one million euro per professorship. To supplement this amount, the *Stifterverband* offers to mediate contact with one of its affiliated foundations, from which the same amount of funding can be applied for. Should this not prove successful, the Volkswagen Foundation will provide a further one million euro. In either event, only one application and assessment procedure is required. A further three million euro must be guaranteed by the university and/or additional external donors. In the experimental subjects, a higher sum might be desirable. The asset management can be assumed by the *Stifterverband*.

Applications can be submitted under the following conditions:

- 1) The additional third-party funds to be acquired by the host university must already be available when the application is submitted. Then, always assuming a positive assessment, the *Stifterverband* and the Volkswagen Foundation can commit to providing their two million euro. The support and the appointment procedure could thus begin immediately on conclusion of the contract.
- 2) Assuming a positive assessment, should the capital to be provided by the proposed host university not yet be available in the required amount, the *Stifterverband* and the Volkswagen Foundation may be able to enter into a provisional commitment. In such a case, the host university has to raise the missing funds within three years. The funds already approved would not be released until the contractual conditions for the endowment as well as the other conditions have been met. In the event that the proposed holder of the professorship moves to the target university at an earlier date, the university shall temporarily assume the costs of financing the professorship.

III. Framework Conditions

The main target groups of this funding initiative are academics (associate (W2) or full (W3) Professor level), and in particular returnees or applicants from abroad. High demands are placed on the qualifications of the candidates with regard to research performance, previous third-party funding, international experience, and teaching concept. In international comparison, they should be among the leaders in their respective subject areas. They must be able to show that they have undertaken a change in their academic environment in the last five years, at the latest with the appointment to the professorship. A return to the working context of doctoral studies or habilitation is excluded. In order to secure a longer-term planning for the universities with the holder of the endowed professorship, applicants should not have reached the usual age limit set for being appointed to a tenured position in civil service. In the event of the holder of the professorship moving to another institution, the university shall be free to decide on an adequate replacement.

An essential criterion for awarding an endowed professorship is the thematic and structural concept of the respective university. Therefore, in addition to the overall scholarly orientation of the organizational unit in which the professorship is embedded and the thematic-strategic objectives and personnel planning for the next ten years, the university is also to provide details of in particular the framework conditions and the adaptation of its thematic focus to the new additional professorship as well as the financing concept.

The application has to be submitted jointly by the university (senior university management and office of the dean or similar) and the candidate.

The responsibility for capital asset management lies with the respective university. In order to ensure the necessary degree of commitment, a legally binding contract is concluded in which the framework conditions are determined. It also regulates what kind of resources the professorship will be sustainably provided with, irrespective of fluctuations in investment income, and under what conditions it is made available. For the intended target group of the W2 and W3 professorships, in addition to the position for the professorship holder, it is usual to provide sufficient resources for positions for a post-doc, a doctoral researcher and, if applicable, technical assistance and non-personnel costs. In addition, it must be ensured that basic equipment is available and that additional large equipment can be procured via the DFG's large-scale equipment program. In any case, the equipment should be adapted to the needs of the relevant field.

IV. Application and Selection Procedures

The applications must be written in English. The submitted applications will be examined in a two-stage review process. In the first step, the applications will be assessed by international peer reviewers who meet the subject-specific requirements as well as the interdisciplinary character of the respective topic areas. Subsequently, the second stage involves a meeting of all participants (candidate, university management, dean's office, Stifterverband, other sponsors and the reviewers) as a rule in the offices of the Volkswagen Foundation. Here, too, leading international experts are involved, but also people with expertise in university policy.

In the fifth year after the appointment, an on-site visit as final assessment will be conducted with the participation of external evaluators appointed by the Stifterverband and the Foundation.

The criteria are:

- The applicant's academic qualifications and reputation
- Innovative character, originality, and interdisciplinary approach of the selected topic
- Proposed teaching concept
- Applicant's interpersonal skills and leadership qualities
- Content- and structure-based concept of the university
- Integration of the thematic focus of the professorship applied for into the strategic concept of the university

V.How to Apply

Please submit your application electronically via the Foundation's application portal (<https://portal.volkswagenstiftung.de>). Instructions can be found online. For technical reasons, the form "budget plan" has to be filled in; please enter the requested 2 million euro in the first line. Likewise, a runtime has to be specified. Here, please enter 5 years, since this is the period the Foundation will be accompanying the professorship. The following information and documents (pdf files) are required:

- The **Forms** completed in the application portal with details of applicant (s), title, costs (2 million euro) and legal declaration.
- **Attachments**
 - Cover letter
 - Summary of objectives and substantiation for the overall concept; in German and English (max. one page for each)
 - Proposal (not to exceed 25 pages applicant + 5 pages university), 12 pt, 1.5 spacing

The proposal on the side of the applicant should include the following details:

- Detailed description stating the thematic scope of the proposed professorship (substantiation of innovative aspects, also to take into account the status of international research, elucidation of methods and future perspectives pertaining to the research area to be pursued)
- An elaborated concept for proposed research including work program and time schedule (for the first three to five years) and for teaching (including information on the time scale)
- Reasons for and description of the academic environment, including any existing collaborations, both at venue as well as national and international, details of the thematic areas represented by participating scholars
- Details of support received elsewhere (projects with titles, life span, amount of funding and funding institution), a delimitation concerning the application made to the Volkswagen Foundation where possible.

On the side of the university the following details are required:

- Innovation and structure-based concept
- The strategic concept of respective faculty and department
- Detailed strategic objectives and personnel planning for the next ten years

- Frame conditions and integration of the thematic focus of the new additional professorship
- Financing concept and details of sustainable provision of resources
- CVs and list of publications
 - Applicant
 - Professors of importance for embedding the professorship (one page each, if only one PDF file)
- Publications of the applicant (please upload separately)
 - in the natural and engineering sciences and medicine: up to three of the most important publications
 - in the humanities and social sciences: up to three examples of work, in case of monographs excerpts including table of contents (not to exceed 70 pages)
- Cost estimates (if possible just one pdf file).

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