

Funding Initiative

Between Europe and the Orient – A Focus on Research and Higher Education in/on Central Asia and the Caucasus

Deadline: [see website](#)

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I. Background

With this funding initiative the Volkswagen Foundation aims at strengthening scientific research on current developments in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Special emphasis is placed on the intensification of symmetric collaborations between researchers from Germany and the region in the development and implementation of joint projects and – especially by promoting young researchers – on making a sustainable contribution to capacity building in the respective countries of the region.

The target region encompasses the countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan that became independent following the collapse of the Soviet Union. In addition to these, the funding initiative also includes Afghanistan and the bordering regions of China (Xinjiang) and the Russian Federation (Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, and the North Caucasus). Neighboring countries (Turkey, Iran i.a.) may only be incorporated if their manifold relationships with the region are addressed or if they are part of a comparative research design. The funding initiative is open to all scientific disciplines.

II. Funding Opportunities

In three funding lines the Volkswagen Foundation supports structurally oriented measures that can be applied for at any time:

Funding line 1: Projects aimed at the reintegration of returning researchers

This funding offer targets highly qualified young researchers from Central Asia and the Caucasus who have received their education abroad and seek to return to a scientific institution in their home country or have returned within the past 12 months after having completed their academic qualification. The material support offered by the Foundation is meant to enable them – in cooperation with a German partner – to translate the knowledge and skills acquired abroad into innovative projects in the fields of research or academic teaching. The projects should make a sustainable contribution to both the establishment of the returning researcher and the development of the scientific discipline in the region. The institution in Central Asia/the Caucasus which the researcher plans to return to is expected to provide a substantiated written statement concerning the integration of the researcher's position into the institutional structures and its continuation after the end of the funding period.

Funding can be made available for „topping up” the researcher's own salary, costs of travel (also of the German partner), consumables and infrastructure (equipment, literature), as well as for research associates, doctoral students or support staff (to facilitate the establishment of a junior research group if desired). A part-time employment in Germany is possible at the beginning of the funding period. The latter should initially not exceed three years; in case that the project is implemented successfully, funding may be extended for up to another three years.

Funding line 2: Workshops, symposia, and summer schools

Within this funding line the Foundation supports workshops, symposia, and summer schools with up to 60 participants organized jointly by researchers from Germany and the region and usually taking place in Central Asia or the Caucasus. The scholarly meetings are expected to foster scientific exchange enabling the transfer of know-how as well as possibly the acquisition of soft skills and primarily target young researchers (PhD students and post-doctoral researchers). Participants should come from several countries of the target region and possibly further neighboring states.

Funding can be made available for travel costs for participants as well as other costs related to the event, e.g. for catering, consumables, and organization.

Funding line 3: Specific support for the creation and expansion of academic infrastructure in the region

Within this context the Foundation may provide funding for pilot projects that make exemplary infrastructural contributions in support of ongoing reform processes, e.g. for the equipment of laboratories in combination with training in modern research methods. It is expected that the projects are prepared and implemented in close cooperation with German researchers and lay the groundwork for future cooperation beyond the actual funding period. (The Foundation does not support teaching projects aimed at the preparation of teaching materials, the development of curricula, or the introduction of new study programs.)

Funding can be made available for equipment, consumables, and travel costs as well as possibly (to a limited extent) personnel expenses. Applicants are required to send a short project outline prior to submitting a full proposal.

III. General Conditions

Researchers from all disciplines holding a doctoral degree are eligible to apply. The main applicant needs to be employed at an institution in Germany; the partner from the target region is considered as co-applicant (with his/her own budget). It is expected that the projects are developed and implemented in close cooperation between both partners.

The Volkswagen Foundation can award grants to academic 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.

Applications must be submitted via the electronic application system portal.volkswagenstiftung.de along with the documents mentioned in section V (Application Checklist). The Foundation expects that applications are submitted jointly by all responsible cooperation partners. In case a proposal is approved, the academic institution of the German main applicant will become the recipient of the grant.

The Foundation will not process applications that have been submitted in identical or similar form to another funding institution. Please also note that institutional overhead costs will not be covered.

IV. Application and Selection Procedure

In the natural, life, and engineering sciences applications must be submitted in English. Applications in the humanities and social sciences may also be submitted in German. All applications should contain a summary in German as well as a German title.

Please submit your application via the electronic application system of the Volkswagen Foundation. The forms provided there must be filled in with information on the applicants, institutions (grant recipient), project (title, duration, and overall costs), and budget.

Following an internal examination by the Foundation staff, proposals will be reviewed in writing by researchers from Germany and abroad.

V. Application Checklist

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

- cover letter
- summary (max. 1 page)
- project description (max. 15 pages, i.e. 51,000 characters without spaces) covering the following aspects:
 - state of the art, including own preliminary work
 - rationale and objective
 - hypotheses and expected results
 - methods
 - time and work schedule (including information on how the work is to be divided among the project partners)
- list of references
- budget explanation for all participating institutions
 - divided into personnel expenses, recurring non-personnel costs (e.g. travel costs, consumables), and non-recurrent expenses (e.g. equipment)
 - broken down according to the working groups in the respective countries
 - calculated in Euro
 - with a justification for each position
- CV, list of relevant publications (max. 2 pages per each principal participant)
- statements of foreign partner institutions (providing information on structural support and possibly own financial contribution)
- signature sheet (with signatures from all applicants)

Applications for funding of scholarly meetings (symposia, workshops, and summer schools) should also include:

- the scientific program of the event, including a time schedule
- a (tentative) list of participants and speakers, including information on how participants will be selected and which of the invited speakers has already confirmed his/her participation

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”.

Information

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Additional Information

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

[Application FAQs / Information for Applicants from Abroad](#)

[Personnel rates for academic staff](#)

[Link to website "Central Asia/Caucasus"](#)