



Information for Applicants 116

Global Issues – Integrating Different Perspectives on Social Inequality

Next Deadline: 30. October 2018

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I. Objectives

This call for funding is part of a broader international funding framework entitled “**Global Issues – Integrating Different Perspectives**” which aims to stimulate international research collaboration and to generate new insights on understudied issues of global relevance. This funding framework is the overarching umbrella for various calls on different thematic areas, all of which reflect challenges that have been acknowledged by the United Nations’ sustainable development agenda as requiring specific action.

“Global Issues” aims to stimulate and strengthen collaboration between researchers based in different parts of the world who usually do not join forces. More specifically, the programme offers funding opportunities for international research teams consisting of scholars based in high income countries as well as low and middle income countries outside Europe¹. By offering funding for international collaboration, the Foundations intend to unite different research foci as well as approaches, and to allow for the development of a global perspective on the issues under consideration which may challenge traditional (and possibly regionally limited) perspectives and open up new ways of thinking. The Foundations strongly encourage research that moves beyond traditional questions and approaches, and significantly advances the current state of the art.

Besides encouraging creative international research constellations and building networks across the globe, the programme seeks to contribute to academic capacity development, i.e. the qualification of junior researchers.

Thematic Call: Global Issues – Integrating Different Perspectives on Social Inequality

Over the last decades, inequalities – in various states and on a number of socio-economic, political as well as (socio-)cultural dimensions – have increased, despite strong economic growth rates in general. Worldwide, millions of people are still disadvantaged and excluded from, for instance, social and political participation, health care, or educational opportunities. Against the backdrop of these developments and the persistence of social inequalities, there have been numerous studies attempting to understand the drivers for growing disparities or to develop measures that could have an impact on equality and justice.

This specific call offers support for multilateral research teams that problematize aspects surrounding social inequality looking at it either through a national lens or from a comparative perspective. Each team may consist of up to five partners², consisting of (at least) one based in a European HIC and two based in LMICs. The number of partners in LMICs has to at least match (or outnumber) those in HICs. Please note that the majority of partners have to be located outside Europe, as purely European consortia are not eligible to apply. It is recommended that at least one partner is currently in one of the countries where the Foundations are located.

¹ According to the World Bank classification:
<https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519>.

² taking on the role of principal investigators (PI)

II. Funding Opportunities

To reach the objective of presenting new research related to social inequality, this call focuses specifically **on the development and reproduction of social inequality**. What are the processes by which social inequalities are transferred, reproduced or, possibly, compensated?

Based on various exchanges with experts from all disciplines within the social sciences, workshops, and conferences, the Foundations have identified a number of overarching thematic pillars that are currently underresearched: Institutions and networks, resource distribution and inheritance, technological change and digitization, and socio-ecological processes of inequality. Accordingly, these areas form the overall thematic framework for this call and the Foundations encourage researchers to look at the processes of (re)producing inequalities in light of one (or several) of these aspects.

Institutions and Networks

The Foundations invite projects to investigate the role of institutions and networks in the production and reproduction of social disparities. In which ways do institutions and networks determine social inequality and impact on, for instance, processes of social stratification? The very basis for this thematic focus is a broad understanding of institutions and networks, both presently as well as historically. These can either be of a more formal nature – such as formal (legal) frameworks and conditions – or take a more informal character – such as families, diaspora networks, and informal clientele-based structures. Furthermore, they can be locally, regionally, nationally, or globally organized.

Resource Distribution and Inheritance

The Foundations also encourage research projects that explore dynamics associated with inequalities that are more strongly related to the access to and distribution of natural and human resources as well as possible conflicts surrounding them (such as land or water conflicts), both presently and historically. This bears opportunities to move beyond a prevailing focus on the distribution of wealth and income within nation-states.

The reproduction of inequalities and material wealth through inheritance constitutes another possible thematic focus. While the transfer of inequalities at an early stage in life has been relatively well-covered, much less is known about the consequences of transfer processes that happen at a biographically later stage.

Technological Change and Digitization: Social, Political, and Socio-Economic Effects

The Foundations also welcome projects to explore interdependencies between technological change and social inequality. Technologies, capacity building, societies, and institutions are highly interlinked and mutually interdependent; accordingly, a society's socio-economic development is also closely related to technological change and advancements. On the one hand, the so-called "digital revolution" offers opportunities to reduce inequalities; on the other hand, it also bears risks to create new ones – in high as well as low and middle income countries.

Overall, new forms of exclusion and inequality may result from an unequal distribution of digital skills and digital education as well as from differences in the ability to access digital technologies and capacities between countries, urban or rural areas, between the sexes, and generations. How can opportunities offered by an advancing digitization be harnessed to the full and risks for the emergence of new inequalities be cushioned?

Socio-Ecological Processes of Inequality

In this pillar, the focus shifts to overarching, transregional or -national linkages, interactions, and relations and their effects on social inequality. The Foundations invite projects that specifically look at interdependencies of socio-ecological processes and their costs: What are the effects of global processes on regions and generations? In which ways do transnational agreements and processes such as international trade or climate agreements and production chains impact on local or regional processes of inequality? To what extent do these processes support the emergence of new, or reinforce existing, asymmetries of power?

With each of these thematic pillars, it is important to always bear in mind the general focus on inequality: It is against the backdrop of issues related to social inequality that these developments and processes are to be investigated.

III. General Conditions

While the disciplinary focus within the research groups should be on the social sciences, interdisciplinary projects are also welcome. This call targets applicants at all career levels post-Ph.D. who are employed by a university or research institution.

Personnel

Funding will be provided for small, but strongly interacting research teams of **up to five PIs/partners**. Besides one partner based in a European HIC (preferably in one of the countries where one of the cooperating Foundations is located), the involvement of two partners currently based in LMICs is generally required. If a team consists of more than three partners, it is important that the number of those based in LMICs is at least equal to the number of those based in HICs. Please note that purely European partnerships are excluded from this call.

In exceptional and well justified cases, it might be sufficient to work in bilateral partnerships, consisting of one partner based in a European HIC and another one based in a LMIC outside Europe. Please consult with the programme managers prior to submitting an application involving only two partners.

Besides establishing global research networks, the support for junior scholars is a central element of this call. To contribute to scholarly capacity building (especially in the LMICs involved in the project), all projects are strongly encouraged to integrate at least one Ph.D. student, preferably based at a partner institution in a LMIC. Suitable supervision of these junior scholars is to be guaranteed by a partner at the same institution. The Foundations also encourage Postdocs (i.e. junior scholars) to act as PIs.

Budget and Duration

Funding will be provided for **up to four years** and covers all direct project-related costs. Project consortia may apply for a maximum amount of **EUR 1.5 million**. The budget may include personnel as well as non-personnel expenses, such as travel costs, consumables, acquisition of data, and equipment. The main share of the funds provided for staff has to be allocated **to junior scholars**. Personnel costs will be covered according to local standards; in general, PhD positions should be budgeted for a minimum of three years and can be budgeted for a duration of up to four years. All 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.³ In addition, 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.

Project teams can 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.

With respect to the funds granted for non-personnel costs, the Foundations expect a relatively even distribution amongst the different partners.

Funds granted to successful projects can only be paid to one grant administrator (based at a research institution or university in Europe).

IV. Application and Selection Procedure

The application process is organized in **two phases**: This is a call for **pre-proposals** to be submitted by 30 October 2018 (midnight, CET). Applications must be submitted in English. They will be reviewed and assessed by an international expert panel which, at a meeting held in winter/spring 2019, will identify a shortlist of groups who will then be invited to submit a full proposal (deadline June 2019.)⁴. The international experts will review the applications using criteria which include scientific quality, potential, and originality of the project as well as the qualifications and track records of the research team's members. In addition, the make-up of the research group and the envisaged equality of partners will be taken into consideration. Shortlisted applicants will be invited to present their project at a review panel meeting held in the fall of 2019.

Due to the expected number of pre-proposals, the Foundations will not be able to provide feedback on pre-proposals that were not successful.

Pre-proposals may also budget for a **preparatory meeting** of all partners to develop the full proposal (up to 10,000 EUR). These funds will be granted in case the pre-proposal was positively reviewed.

Timeline:

- Deadline for pre-proposals: 30. October 2018
- Selection of pre-proposals and invitation to submit a full proposal: February/March 2019
- Deadline for submitting full proposals: June 2019
- Review meeting, including presentations by teams: September/early October 2019 (tbd)
- Decisions: November 2019

³ This needs to be in accordance with the regulations at the respective home institution.

⁴ Details will be provided with the invitation to submit a full proposal.

V. Application Checklist

Applications must be submitted using the Volkswagen Foundation's [electronic application system](#). Please, familiarise yourself with the system prior to the deadline; all co-applicants need to be registered. With your submission, you need to provide the following information: **Full name and office address of the main applicant(s), intended grant administrator** (European research institution), **and brief information on the project** (brief informative title, duration, and total budget).

In addition, the following documents need to be provided as “**enclosures**” (pdf-files):

- **Signature Sheet** (signed by all applicants, scanned or electronic signatures are accepted)
- **Summary** of the project (Maximum of **2,500 characters**, incl. spaces)
- **Description of proposed research project (17,000 characters**, incl. spaces/**max. 5 pages**), including the following information:
 - research questions and aim of the project
 - theoretical framework
 - methodological approach
 - state of the art/significance for the field
 - participants and their tasks within the project
 - organisation of group and work plan
 - list of referenced literature
- **Preliminary total budget in Euro** (in tabular form: gross amount; project-related costs), separately for each PI, differentiated using the following categories: personnel expenditure (based on local standards), travel costs, science and communication measures, consumables, and technical equipment/acquisition of data⁵
- **Short CV's of all PIs** (up to 2 pages each)
- If applicable: a brief description of the **preparatory workshop**, including a budget (up to 10,000 EUR).

⁵ Please note: A more detailed budget is required with the full applications; shortlisted consortia will receive more detailed information at a later stage.

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Additional Information

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

Link to Webpage: [Global Issues – Integrating Different Perspectives on Social Inequality](#)