

## Funding Initiative

## Knowledge for Tomorrow – Cooperative Research Projects in Sub-Saharan Africa

Call for Pre-Proposals for Postdoctoral Fellowships in the Social Sciences in  
Sub-Saharan and North Africa

**Deadline for Pre-Proposals**

June 27, 2014

**Information**

**Africa Initiative  
The Humanities and  
Social Sciences**

**The International Team**

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### 1. Objectives

The Foundation's funding initiative "Knowledge for Tomorrow - Cooperative Research Projects in Sub-Saharan Africa" aims at providing sustainable support for research and research capacity development in Sub-Saharan Africa. This funding scheme represents a fundamental career development strategy for African researchers, as it provides promising postdoctoral researchers based in Africa with opportunities to enhance both their skills and academic qualifications; ultimately, it enables them to establish professional perspectives in academia. This is to be achieved in cooperation between African and European scholars, as any postdoctoral project funded under this scheme needs to be carried out in collaboration with a European partner institute as well as further partners. Through this African-European cooperation, the initiative aims to support the development and extension of academic networks within, and beyond the African continent.

This Postdoctoral Fellowship Program, jointly funded by the Gulbenkian Foundation and Volkswagen Foundation, aims at providing sustainable support for research in the Social Sciences in Sub-Saharan as well as North Africa. It offers opportunities for postdoctoral researchers at both junior and senior level (i.e. 3 to 6 years post-PhD) to develop and conduct their own research projects. While open for any applicant who meets the eligibility criteria, the current call builds on a previous call for proposals in this area from 2011, and especially invites those junior fellows currently funded as part of the initiative to submit applications for senior fellowships. In the selection process, they will then compete with the other experienced applicants from the region. Similarly, senior fellows currently funded as part of this initiative can apply for some final funding for up to two years (a maximum of 50,000 EUR). For further information on this possibility they should contact the respective Program Manager.

## 2. Thematic Scope

The call is open to applications from the Social Sciences, including disciplines such as sociology, political science, economics, social anthropology, and contemporary social or political history. However, only researchers who are based in, or wish to return to, Sub-Saharan or North African countries are eligible to apply.

Thematically, current social, economic, and political developments in contemporary African societies are at the core of this call. Proposed projects should have a strong reference to questions and problems concerning Sub-Saharan or North Africa. In addition, they should transcend disciplinary boundaries and limitations.

More specifically, projects understanding African countries as entangled in global interdependencies, referring both to North-South as well as South-South relations, are especially encouraged. Similarly, processes of globalization in the African context and their social and/or cultural impact can constitute important aspects of such projects. Accordingly, possible topics of research include: processes of urbanization, the emergence and scope of violent conflicts, peace building strategies, foreign actors in Africa, inter-African relationships, questions of social order, measures aiming at poverty reduction. Cultural and religious as well as historical questions and approaches can be included, but should not form the main focus of the project.

## 3. Funding Opportunities

As indicated, this postdoctoral fellowship program aims at supporting young postdoctoral researchers based in Sub-Saharan or North Africa by (1) providing an opportunity to enhance both skills and academic qualifications, (2) strengthening partnerships between African and European scholars, and (3) developing and extending academic networks within Africa and beyond.

The call provides funding opportunities for both junior and senior postdoctoral scholars. To be eligible for a **junior postdoctoral fellowship**, applicants must have less than three years of postdoctoral experience (the PhD must be completed by March 2015, at the latest). Postdoctoral researchers with more than three, but less than six years of postdoctoral experience are eligible to apply for a **senior fellowship**. Both senior and junior researchers are then offered a fellowship of up to three years to conduct postdoctoral research while based on the African continent. The fellowship covers salary, research, travel costs, and administrative costs of up to 90,000 EUR for junior fellows and of up to 120,000 EUR for senior fellows. In addition, the program also offers opportunities and financial means to incorporate a European postdoctoral fellow in the project and work with international mentors (see below).

### **Coordinator of the Postdoctoral Fellowship Program**

The entire Fellowship Program in the Social Sciences will be coordinated by a senior academic based at a German university and his team. This academic has already been nominated by the Volkswagen Foundation; thus, this role is not open for applications. The coordinator is responsible for the management and administration of all the fellowships awarded as part of this program. More specifically, besides the financial administration of the grants, the coordinator brings the fellows together for workshops and summer schools several times during the fellowship. Importantly, the German coordinator will be the official grant recipient – and he will forward any financial means awarded through the fellowship to the fellow or the host institution, respectively. Please note that neither the African host institution nor the European partner will be the official grant recipient.

### **African Research Institution**

Although the official grant recipient will be the German coordinator, the funds will be forwarded to, and then administered by, the local academic institution on the African continent where the fellow will be employed. A basic research infrastructure should be provided for the fellow by the African institution; the fellow may include administrative costs for this institution of up to 6,000 EUR for the entire duration of the fellowship in his/her budget.

### **European Partner**

For both types of fellowships, a cooperation with a European research institution is mandatory. The researcher/academic from this partner institute will act as a scientific consultant to the fellow and his/her research project. Mutual visits and exchanges will not only benefit the project, but also offer valuable opportunities for international networking. To enable a fruitful exchange between the European partner and the postdoctoral fellow, applicants can include an additional amount of up to 5,000 EUR in their budget, which can be used by the European partner (e.g. to cover travel expenditure as part of the recurring non-personnel costs).

The African fellows (both junior and senior) need to find and choose their European partner independently. When looking for partners, they should carefully reflect on their choice, especially in light of the research topics covered by the selected institution.

### **Additional Support for Postdoctoral Fellows Based in Europe (optional)**

African postdocs can choose to include an additional postdoctoral fellow (with less than 6 years of postdoctoral experience) in their projects who is based at a European research institution. They can apply for an additional sum of up to 25,000 EUR to include this associated postdoc, which will enhance the exchange of scholarly expertise. The funds are meant to support these postdoctoral fellows to actively participate in the research project proposed by the African applicant; they can cover personnel expenditure (for 3 months full-time or a maximum of 6 months part-time employment), travel costs for

meetings and fieldtrips to/in Africa, as well as consumables. The European fellow's role in the project has to be described and justified by the applicant. The European fellow may, but does not have to be associated with the cooperating European partner institution.

### **Mentorship Program (optional)**

A key feature of this fellowship program is the funding provided for personal mentorship. Through the mentorship program, the fellow can establish links to leading scientists of his or her choice – both from African as well as non-African institutions. This additional element offers opportunities for (1) scientific networking, (2) knowledge exchange between mentors and fellow, and (3) a third-party perspective on the fellow's project. Mentors could, for example, get involved by introducing the fellow to peer networks, assisting him/ her with publications in international journals as well as presentations of his/ her work at international conferences. In addition, mentors should provide knowledge not only of techniques and methods, but also of know-how learned and experiences made throughout a scientific career. Furthermore, the mentors are meant to offer assistance that goes beyond the support of the European partner institution. The mentors must agree to act as supporters of the fellow and the fellow needs to provide a written statement by the mentors confirming their support with the pre-proposal. The fellow can apply for an additional sum of up to 10,000 EUR for the mentorship program (or up to 5,000 EUR, if only one mentor is chosen); however, these funds can only be used for meetings between the fellow and the mentor(s). Salaries or honoraria for the mentors will not be covered.

When choosing their mentors, applicants must consider the following regulations: Mentors must not be the anticipated European partner of the fellow. One of the mentors can (but does not have to) be based at the African host institution where the project is meant to be conducted. Any further mentor(s) should be from a different institution and, preferably, a different national context. Previous collaborators are not excluded from the mentorship program, yet, please note that widening professional networks is an essential idea behind this program.

Prospective mentors and their benefit beyond the scientific and project-related advice have to be described by the applicant. If the applicant cannot nominate at least two mentors at the time of application, he/she can still apply for the mentorship funds, but needs to specify and justify the desired areas of expertise covered by the mentors. Mentors can, then, be nominated and submit their support letter at a later stage.

### **Budget**

As noted, the total budget covers up to 90,000 EUR for junior fellowships and up to 120,000 EUR for senior fellowships. All budget items must be justified specifically and could include, for instance:

<b>Budget item</b>	<b>Comment(s), specifications, limitations</b>
<b>Personnel expenditure</b>	
Salary or "top-up" of fellow	Depending on experience and customary local salaries; "top-up": applies to those already employed by an African research institution
Salary or "top-up" to employ lecturers	To reduce personal teaching duties
Salaries or fees of graduate students involved in the research project	<i>Juniors</i> : can include (and supervise) students up to Master's Level <i>Seniors</i> : can include (and supervise) students up to PhD Level (at least one, but a maximum of two PhD students should be involved)
Child care	Only if receipts can be provided. (Please note: Child care is not covered if offered by family members.)
<b>Recurring expenses</b>	
Travel costs	To conferences, workshops and meetings; the fellow needs to have an active part
Visits to institutions	up to 4 months per year
Consumables	
Costs for field work	
Soft skill development	E.g. language courses or courses for project management
<b>Non-recurrent expenses</b>	
Small equipment	Limited to up to 10% of the total budget
Publication costs	
Administrative costs	Up to 6,000 EUR

When preparing the budget, the applicant is requested to adhere to the above structure and take the specifications for the respective budget items into consideration. The (additional) budget for the postdoctoral fellow based in Europe (optional, up to 25,000 EUR), for the European partner (up to 5,000 EUR) and for the mentorship program (optional, up to 10,000 EUR) should be listed separately, however, still follow the above structure where applicable.

#### **4. Application and Selection Process**

The application is organized as a three-stage process. In the first stage, pre-proposals must be submitted as **three pdf files in English** by **June 27, 2014**. This can be done in two ways – please choose one of the following: applications can **either** be uploaded via the electronic application system (<https://portal.volkswagenstiftung.de/vwsantrag/login.do?siteLanguage=en>) (as preferred option) **or**, alternatively, sent via e-mail with the relevant attachments (again: three pdf files) to [socialscience2014@volkswagenstiftung.de](mailto:socialscience2014@volkswagenstiftung.de). In both cases, the three pdf files should be (1) the cover letter, (2) the pre-proposal, and (3) all appendices. If

you choose the electronic application system, the files should be uploaded under (1) "Cover Letter", (2) "Pre-proposal description", and (3) "Other Enclosures", respectively. Please do **not** upload the application on the application system **and** send them via e-mail.

### **Stage 1**

The pre-proposals will be reviewed and assessed by an international expert committee. Decisions on these pre-proposals will be communicated in the fall of 2014 and successful applicants will then be encouraged to submit a full application. In case of a positive evaluation, recommendations from the review panel to prepare the full proposal will also be provided. Please note the checklist for pre-proposals at the end of this document.

#### **Meeting for the preparation of the full proposal (optional; to be included in the pre-proposal)**

Applicants may apply for funding for a preparatory meeting of relevant project partners (up to 5,000 EUR) to be organized and held before the deadline for the submission of full proposals. Date, venue, participants, and a budget of this preparatory meeting already have to be specified in the pre-proposals. The budget should be listed separately. It should, however, still follow the structure outlined above for those budget items relevant to the meeting. Grants for preparatory workshops are only made to those applicants who will be invited to submit a full proposal (and only if a detailed justified budget is provided in the pre-proposal).

### **Stage 2**

Successful applicants of *stage 1* **will be invited to submit full proposals**. All full proposals will undergo an international review process. Details of the requirements for full proposals including the recommendations of the review committee will be forwarded to the successful applicants in the fall of 2014. The deadline for the submission of full proposals will be at the beginning of 2015.

**Please note:** Applicants cannot proceed to *stage 2* unless they have been invited to do so.

### **Stage 3**

Applicants who have submitted full proposals **will then have the opportunity to present their project** at a selection conference presumably to be held in Ghana in the spring of 2015. In the course of this conference, they will also be interviewed by the international review panel. Final decisions on fellowship grants will be made in the early summer of 2015.

## **5. Notes for Applicants**

The Foundations can only provide funds to academic institutions. Furthermore, it is not possible to fund projects for development aid or short-term ap-

plications. The Foundations cannot consider applications which have been submitted at the same time either in the same or some similar form to other funding institutions. Also, they are not able to allocate funding to cover commitments entered into prior to the receipt of the grant letter.

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### **Checklist for Pre-Proposals for Postdoctoral Fellowships in the Social Sciences**

Pre-proposals have to be written in English and have to be submitted by the applicant. Particular format requirements or application forms do not exist for this call; however, applicants are requested to consider the structure provided below.

#### **Cover letter, which should contain:**

- Full name, address, and signature of the applicant
- Indication of the call for pre-proposals to which the application refers
- Indication of the fellowship (junior or senior) applied for
- Brief informative title of the proposed project
- Duration of funding and sum applied for (total as well as separated into fellowship, postdoctoral fellow based in Europe, mentorship program, and preparatory meeting, if applicable)
- In case of e-mail submission: Statement of the applicant that this application has not been and will not be sent to another funding organization
- Full name (including title) and address of the European partner, the postdoctoral fellow based in Europe and the mentors, if applicable

#### **Pre-proposal**

- Summary of the project (up to 1,400 **characters**)
- Description of the project and relevant information for its realization (up to 2,500 **words**):
  - aim of the project
  - brief overview of and relation to the existing literature
  - theoretical background and methodological approach
  - preliminary studies, if applicable<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Applicants who received a grant from the previous call should include a condensed version of their final report.

- Work plan including distribution of tasks among fellow and postdoctoral fellow based in Europe, if applicable
- Budget
- Summary of the applicant's current research/work (up to 1,000 words)
- Expertise and role of the European partner institution (up to 1 page)
- Expertise and role of the postdoctoral fellow based in Europe – if applicable (up to 1 page)
- Expertise and role of the mentors, if applicable (up to 1 page)
- Date, venue, participants, and budget of the preparatory meeting for full proposals (if applicable, up to 1 page, only funded for successful applicants of *stage 1*)

**Appendices:**

- CV of the applicant – up to 2 pages
- Ph.D. certificate or a letter from the main supervisor stating that the Ph.D. will be completed by March 2015
- Statement of support from the African research institution (including the relevant financial administration) agreeing to the terms and conditions of the postdoctoral fellowships [see additional form]
- Letter of support of the European partner institution stating that it will provide the basic infrastructure during the visits
- Statement of the European postdoctoral fellow confirming an interest to actively participate in the research project proposed by the African applicant, if applicable
- Letter of support by the mentors confirming their support for the applicant, if applicable