

Navigating a Transforming World Order

Fellowships on Security and Technology

Profile Area: Societal Transformations

Deadline: April 30, 2026, 2pm CET

With its Navigating a Transforming World Order Fellowship Program, the foundation supports postdoctoral researchers in generating new knowledge on the transformation processes of the global security order. Through the development of evidence-based solutions for dealing with global current and future challenges, the foundation seeks to contribute to a sustainable global security and peace architecture. The focus is on multi-perspectivity at the interface of science, practice, and politics.



Research Area: All Disciplines



Funding Type: Postdoctoral Fellowships



Target Group: Early Career Researchers up to 5 years after completing their PhD



Max.: 450.000 EUR



Max.: Three years



The fellowships span 36 months consisting of research (24 months) and a practice-oriented, 'training on the job' module (12 months). The modules can be combined flexibly. In addition, the foundation offers a coordinating program with external partners for the whole cohort of approx. ten fellows and expects participation in respective activities.

1 Objectives

International relations and the geopolitical landscape are currently undergoing rapid and dramatic change. Violent conflicts are destabilizing the world, the former security architecture is eroding, and new powers and alliances are emerging. At the same time, the global security order is characterized by a polycrisis. The World Economic Forum's 20th Global Risks Report, published in January 2025, paints the picture of 'an increasingly fragmented global landscape in which escalating geopolitical, environmental, social, and technological challenges threaten stability and progress.' These developments are shaking the collective and individual sense of security; they lead to transformations of the former world order and underlying (power) systems – with an uncertain outcome.

With its fellowship program, the foundation targets the security experts of the future. The aim is to develop innovative, multi-perspective research approaches and methods to gain new knowledge on security in a holistic understanding. At the same time, the fellows shall be (further) educated as actors who can overcome the boundaries between science, politics and practice and thus develop evidence-based solutions for the transformations of the global security and peace architecture.

2 Scope of Funding

Postdoctoral researchers (up to 5 years after completing their PhD) from various disciplines are eligible for funding. The aim is to train security experts at the interface of science, practice, and politics who use multi-perspective approaches to develop evidence-based solutions for the current and future security order. We expect the fellows to integrate at least two stays at European (international) institutions in their fellowships to develop and strengthen international networks and a decided European perspective.

The fellowships span 3 years, of which 24 months are earmarked for research. Another 12 months are devoted to a practice oriented-'training on the job'-module consisting of activities such as workshops on modern science communication or policy consulting as well as stays at (inter)national organizations or Think Tanks. The training program will be developed individually with the support of the Volkswagen Foundation and flexibly integrated in the overall fellowship. The fellowship is further embedded in a European framework program. We expect the fellows to actively participate in respective activities.

The present, first call specifically addresses the nexus of security and technology. Possible topics include – but are not limited to – artificial intelligence, emerging technologies, the increasing importance of space in the context of security and defense, as well as issues surrounding arms control, innovation and untapped power, deterrence, and ethics.

The foundation plans to publish two subsequent calls on an annual basis, each with a different thematic focus.

3 Application and Selection Procedure

The deadline for applications is April 30, 2026. The assessment will be carried out in a two-stage process by an international and interdisciplinary expert panel. We strive to announce the results of the first stage in mid-August 2026. Successful candidates will then be invited to an in-

person selection workshop (stage 2). The workshop will take place in person in Hanover/Germany and will consist of different components focusing on scientific and personal assessment.

3.1 Overview

Timeframe

Webinar (English): February 12, 2026, 10:00-11:00 am CET

Webinar (English): April 9, 2026, 10:00-11:00 am CET

Deadline for submissions: April 30, 2026, 2:00 pm

Notification of the results of stage 1: approx. mid-August 2026

Review meeting with presentations: approx. mid-September 2026

Announcement of funding decisions: expected in December 2026

Start of funding: January 2027

3.2 Procedure

The application must be submitted in English via the foundation's application portal and consists primarily of the following documents

- Project Description (max. 9 pages, including list of references; see template)
- CV (max. 2 pages; see template)
- A short video (max. 120 sec) consisting of a short self-introduction, your motivation to apply for the fellowship in the context of your previous career and future career goals as well as first ideas for the 12-month practice oriented, 'training on the job'-module matching your specific research project.
- Expenditure Plan (see template)

For further mandatory documents, see below and please check the website.

The assessment is based on the following criteria

- Scientific quality, originality and overall suitability for the call
- Innovative theoretical and methodological approaches that take multiple perspectives into account
- Openness to multidisciplinary and cross-sectoral exchange (intended or established partnerships)
- Scientific impact (potential for generating new knowledge in the research area and discipline)
- Real-world impact (policy uptake)

- Career prospects within and outside of academia

4 Information on the Application

4.1 Our Funding Platform

Applications and short proposals have to be submitted via the Volkswagen Foundation's [funding platform](#). All templates (CV, expenditure plan, etc.) are available for download on the funding platform and on the website for the respective programme announcement. Please only use the templates available for download there when submitting your application.

It is important that you register early on in the process.

For further support please contact support@volkswagenstiftung.de.

4.2 Information on Enclosures

Please only use the template available for download on our funding platform or on the website of the respective programme announcement.

4.2.1 Project Description

Please refer to the specifications in the template regarding content and formal requirements, such as the maximum number of pages.

4.2.2 Expenditure Plan

Please only use the Excel template available for download on our funding platform. It is not possible to upload and use individual / other Excel sheets. For instructions on how to fill in the template, please refer to the respective help sheet.

4.2.3 Curricula Vitae

Please submit the curricula vitae in tabular, narrative form.

4.2.4 Equal Opportunity Funds

To support equal opportunities and diversity in the research system, the Volkswagen Foundation offers the possibility to apply for equal opportunity funds. These funds – granted in addition to the maximum funding sum – support measures that serve to compensate for disadvantages at an individual level and/or aim to strengthen diversity in the education and research system in general. Equal Opportunity Funds can be applied for 1% of the total application amount (excluding overheads).

For further information please refer to our [website](#).

4.2.5 Further Enclosures

In addition to the written application and the CV please submit

- A short video (Videos may be no longer than 120 seconds. Acceptable formats are avi, mp4, mov, wmv, flv, mpg, and mpeg (bit rate: audio = 192, video = 2,500; container format with variable codec). The file size may not exceed 30 MB).
- Letter of support of your actual or intended scientific institution (at least faculty level) stating the commitment to employ you and to manage the overall grant in case of approval
- Basic Data Management Plan (if applicable)
- Equal Opportunity Funds (if applicable)

4.3 Further Information

4.3.1 Overheads

With the exception of Max Planck, Leibniz, Fraunhofer and Helmholtz institutes, public or non-profit scientific institutions in Germany can apply for 10% overheads in addition to the direct project costs. For more information on overheads, see 'Information on Lump Sum for Overheads', which is provided at our [download section](#).

4.3.2 Open Science

The foundation is committed to Open Science ([Open Science Policy](#)). Thus, we expect that results will be published open access and that data generated will be made available for scientific use following the FAIR principles via recognized repositories (see [NFDIs](#), [re3data](#), and [RI-sources](#)). If data generation is intended, please submit a data management plan provided by the foundation ([Basic Data Management Plan](#)). Alternatively, you can submit a more detailed, discipline specific data management plan. Please clearly state in your application if you don't intend to generate data.

Note: The Volkswagen Foundation offers the module 'Data Reuse - Additional funding for the preparation of research data' for funded projects to prepare research data. You can apply for the module during or up to six months after the project duration.

4.3.3 General Information

The foundation cannot be held responsible for any obligations entered into prior to the receipt of grant approval.

Applications that have been or are intended to be submitted in this or a similar form to another funding organization will not be processed by the foundation. Applications that do not meet the formal requirements will not be considered for review. The foundation can only award funds to scientific institutions.

5 Contact

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6 Further Information

- [Website VolkswagenStiftung](#)
- Website [Navigating a Transforming World Order – Fellowships on Security and Technology](#)
- [FAQ and Service \(including download section\)](#)
- [Influence of Generative AI on Research and the Volkswagen Foundation's Funding Activities](#)
- [Recommendations for Sustainable Travel](#)