

### Taskforces

# Transformational Knowledge on Democracies under Change – Transdisciplinary Perspectives

**Profile area:** Societal Transformations

**Next deadline:** 29 October 2024 (12:00 - noon CET)

This funding program addresses social challenges that are caused by processes of change in democratic structures. Scientists and partners from (civil) society work together on issues and use the research results to develop recommendations for action for relevant actors in politics, economy or (civil) society.



Humanities, cultural and social sciences (lead); cooperation with natural, life, data and technical sciences possible



Taskforces



Inter- und transdisciplinary research groups with researchers and partners from (civil)society, international participation possible



up to 180,000 EUR



1 year

# 1 Objectives

Democratic forms of government are under pressure worldwide, the legitimacy of elected governments is being questioned in some places and in some democratically governed countries such as Germany, dissatisfaction with the current functioning of democratic institutions is growing. Academics and (civil) society actors alike are contributing to discourses on how various current challenges such as climate change, the Covid-19 pandemic, advancing digitalization and the current economic and energy crisis (will) change the relationship between the state and its citizens now and in the future.

So far, however, these different perspectives on the transformation processes of democracies have hardly been brought into an exchange with each other. Academic and (civil) society discourses are largely separated from each other.

With this funding program, the Foundation encourages researchers and partners from society to bring together their respective perspectives, ideas and experiences and to work together on urgent challenges relating to processes of change in democracies. In addition to research, this program offers the opportunity to develop concrete recommendations, e.g. for politics, relevant social actors or the economy, and to contribute to the implementation of these recommendations.

# 2 Scope of funding

With a duration of one year, the focus of the task forces is on the rapid development of research results on an urgent, clearly definable issue that addresses concrete challenges to democracy in Germany or at the EU level. With the task forces, the Foundation offers a space for experimentation in which academics and actors from (civil) society work together on a concrete research question, develop approaches to solutions and work on the dissemination of these recommendations for action to relevant actors.

The Foundation understands transdisciplinary research as joint research at eye level between researchers and non-academic actors. In this partnership, all actors act as equals and work together from the development of the research topic and the research question to the implementation of the research results in concrete recommendations for action. The focus is on the interest of all actors involved in engaging in a change of perspective and developing a new perspective on processes of change in democracy by bringing together different sources of knowledge from science and (civil) society (transformation knowledge). The final phase of the task force is explicitly intended for the dissemination of recommendations for action to relevant actors from politics, business and society - as well as the implementation of measures to engage in an exchange with these actors about the project results.

As an independent private funding organization, the Foundation places great value on funding independent, open-ended research. For this reason, the Foundation explicitly asks how applicants plan to deal with the individual interests and agendas of the various actors in the research process. Applicants are therefore asked to justify the project constellation and reflect on how the interests of the individual partners will be taken into account and continuously reflected upon in the research project. The Foundation encourages all applicants to constantly evaluate their own and joint learning process during the cooperation and, if necessary, to make sensible adjustments to the research process. In addition, the Foundation encourages the involvement of so-called integration experts in the research process who, as process guides/mediators/facilitators,

accompany the project from the very beginning and incorporate so-called process knowledge into the research process.

## **2.1 Target group**

The funding offer is primarily aimed at researchers who have completed a doctorate in the humanities, cultural studies and social sciences as well as practitioners from society. Partners from society are employees or volunteers with at least two years of professional experience or voluntary expertise in the subject area, e.g. from non-profit non-governmental organizations (associations/citizens' initiatives), representatives from authorities and/or government bodies, media representatives, representatives/freelancers from the field of art and culture who are involved in democratic processes. Non-profit companies can only be integrated into the project if they pursue a social mission or can demonstrate social commitment and their contribution to the project flows directly back into social structures outside the company.

Due to the short duration of the funding offer, this funding offer is particularly suitable for consortia that either know each other through previous collaboration or have come together through one of the networking workshops organized by the Foundation at regular intervals. The networking workshop for 2024 has already taken place in February 2024.

## **2.2 Thematic topics**

Thematically, projects from the following areas are possible:

1. analysis of conditions under which democracies change
2. analysis of processes through which socio-cultural processes in democracies are (re)shaped
3. transformation of the 'infrastructure' of democracies (methods/instruments/formats of democracy).

The decisive factor for the review is the presentation of a concrete and urgent challenge for democratic structures that are focused on Germany or the EU level. The focus is on issues for which actionable recommendations based on research are required within a short period of time. International comparisons are possible, provided they serve to address the research question and can be carried out within the one-year period. In addition, the project design and the recommendations for action should be geared towards possible learning effects in Europe or Germany. The Foundation invites you to also address challenges that are still emerging but will play a role in changing democratic structures in the near future.

## **2.3 General conditions**

### **Project design and application requirements:**

- Team of one to two researchers and up to two different non-scientific practice partners from society;
- The project (main application) is led by researchers from the humanities, cultural sciences or social sciences;

- Integration of researchers from the natural, life, technical or data sciences (e.g. computational social science/digital humanities) is possible
- International participation from science and/or (civil) society is possible (also from low- and middle-income countries in other regions of the world), if useful for the implementation of the project;

The Foundation explicitly encourages the applicant teams to take **scientific risks** and think '**out-of-the-box**' where necessary when selecting their topics and methods. The focus of the task forces is on the publication of **concrete recommendations for action** in the form of policy papers, handbooks or other formats. Scientific publications are also possible, if appropriate and feasible within the framework of the funding.

In order to promote dialog with the relevant decision-makers, the Foundation strongly recommends that **creative science communication formats** (podcasts, science slams, plays, etc.) be considered for the development and implementation phase of recommendations for action. Applicants must submit a concept (idea, implementation, personnel) for how recommendations for action based on research results are to be distributed among relevant stakeholders.

Note: For larger science communication projects that go beyond this, the "[Additional funding for science communication](#)" offer is available in the case of funding.

The foundation invites all funded projects to a kick-off event and in the further course of the project to a symposium to present the results.

### Overheads

State and state-recognized universities and universities for applied sciences can apply for 10 % overheads. For more information on overheads, see "Information on lump sum for overheads", which is provided in our [download-section](#).

### Open Science

The Foundation is committed to Open Science ([Open Science Policy](#)). It is therefore expected that project results will be published open access and that data collected will be made available for scientific use via recognized repositories (see [NFDIs](#), [re3data](#), and [RIsources](#)). If data collection is intended, the essential information is to be presented in a data management plan ([basic data management plan](#) of the foundation or a more detailed data management plan of the respective discipline). In case no data is generated in the project, this needs to be explicitly stated in the application.

Note: For the later preparation of the project's research data, in the case of a grant, the offer '[Data Reuse - Additional funding for the preparation of research data](#)' is available.

### 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 submitted for review. The Foundation can only award funds to scientific institutions.

### 3 Application and Selection Procedure

#### 3.1 Time schedule



#### 3.2 Procedure

Processing approx. 5-7 months:

- Submission of applications (in German or English) by the deadline via the application portal;
- Formal review by Foundation;
- Review by an interdisciplinary and international review panel;
- Decision.

The Foundation will hold webinars in advance of the deadline for questions about the application process. The dates will be announced on the funding website. Participation in one of the webinars is strongly recommended. For subsequent consultation appointments, please arrange a telephone appointment by e-mail.

#### Review Criteria:

- Relevance of the research question to democracies under change;
- Originality and quality of the concept of transdisciplinary research;
- Suitability for the task forces format;
- Design of the cooperation at eye level;
- Consistency of project design and methodology;
- Scientific qualification or proven (practical) expertise;
- Development of transformation knowledge (translation of research findings into concrete recommendations for action);
- Convincing reflection, integration and learning process in the project.

## 4 Checkliste for the Application

### 4.1 Electronic Application – Instructions

Please read the information about the electronic application system on the website of the Volkswagen Foundation prior to submitting your application. Information can be found in the document “[Electronic Application System – Instructions and Tips](#)”. It is important that applicants register all involved parties early on in the process. Without a user profile it is not possible to invite co-applicants or to submit an application.

If you have technical questions about using the electronic application system, please contact [support@volkswagenstiftung.de](mailto:support@volkswagenstiftung.de).

### 4.2 Application documents

All subsequent application documents must be submitted in German or English.

#### 4.2.1 Proposal according to the template file

A template is available on the funding initiative website for the presentation of applications. Applications that exceed the specified word count cannot be reviewed for reasons of fairness.

#### 4.2.2 Budget plan

The grant is awarded to a main scientific grant recipient. All cost items, including those for the non-scientific partners, are managed by the (main) applicant university or non-university research institution and forwarded if necessary. The framework conditions for forwarding are determined by the respective research institution.

Non-scientific partners submit their own cost plans in the application portal as co-applicants.

You can apply for the following expenses:

- Funds for scientific and non-scientific staff working on the project;
- recurring costs (travel expenses, events, consumables, work contracts, services), funds for science communication measures, funds for the implementation of recommendations for action; to be listed as a separate item;
- Non-recurring costs (equipment, literature, open access publication costs, software, licenses, fees, data procurement and management);
- Funds for support from a professional communicator for activities in the field of science communication;
- Funds for so-called integration experts (for process support/mediation/facilitation etc.);
- Administration allowance, based on the requested personnel, material and travel costs per non-scientific partner of up to 10 %, up to a maximum of EUR 12,000.

Please note that the personnel funds for a task force can also be used to increase existing positions or for leaves of absence (teaching replacement (project-related sabbatical), teaching relief). Personnel funds may not be used to establish a new position for writing a Ph.D thesis. Travel expenses can also be used for short research stays/observations at a non-academic actor or at an academic research institution.

#### **4.2.3 Curriculum Vitae of every applicant**

We require a tabular and narrative career history of all applicants, including practitioners from society. Various templates are available on the funding initiative website for this purpose.

#### **4.2.4 Template: Further Information on the Application**

The Volkswagen Foundation aims to promote good working conditions in academia. Please submit a personnel concept using the template Further Information on the Application and upload the completed template to the Volkswagen Foundation's application portal in the category "Other enclosures". Information on the personnel concept as well as on funding for personnel in general can be found [here](#).

#### **4.2.5 Further application documents**

- Please submit a generally understandable summary in German of approx. 200 words.
- Please upload an informative max. 90-second short video presentation of the project in German or English, focusing on the team constellation and the joint reflection, integration and learning process (parameters: Length: max. 90 seconds; File types: MPEG 1 - 4; bit rate: audio = 192, video = 2,500; codec with variable frame rate).
- If research data is generated, please upload a data management plan.

## **5 Contact**

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## 6 More Information

- [Website Initiative](#)
- [Template Application German](#) **oder** [Template Application English](#)
- [Template CV Academics German](#) **oder** [Template CV Academics English](#)
- [Template CV Society German](#) **oder** [Template CV Society English](#)
- [Template Personal concept](#)
- [FAQs for applicants](#)
- [Application system](#)
- [Electronic application made easy - instructions and tips](#)
- [Recommendations for sustainable traveling](#)
- [Information on lump sum for overheads](#)
- [Open Science Policy](#)
- [Transdisziplinarität](#)
- [Funding Diversity](#)
- [Influence of generative models of text and image creation in research and in the funding activities of the Volkswagen Foundation](#)