

Call for Applications

Theme Week *Multiple Crises – Strained Resources*

Profile Area: Societal Transformations

Deadline: September 2, 2025, 2:00 pm CET

In its "Theme Weeks", the Volkswagen Foundation funds scientific symposia on various predetermined topics. The symposia are carried out in the same week at the Xplanatorium Herrenhausen Palace, Hanover/Germany and accompanied by a supporting program organized by the Foundation.

The theme week "Multiple Crisis – Strained Resources" aims at researchers who are working on approaches to a cost-intensive societal transformation under scarcity or are discussing the actual effects of strained resources on Western Market Economies.



Research Area: Economics (social and cultural science if applicable)



Funding Type: Organization of a scientific symposium



Target Group: Researchers at German universities and research institutions, optionally international co-applicants



Date of the symposium: April 15-17, 2026

1 Objectives

The success of Western Market Economies, and Germany's market economy in particular, has come under increasing pressure in recent years. The digital transformation of society, the de-carbonization of the economy and the decline in international trade volumes in times of a renewed rise in protectionism are present-day challenges which are accompanied by strained social and economic resources. There are various reasons for the scarcity of financial resources, working force and raw materials. While the analysis of problems resembles across political parties, the publicly discussed solutions in the current political debate are sometimes diametrically opposed.

Questions regarding a successful transformation of society under scarcity are also of concern to the scientific community. With the theme week "Multiple Crises – Strained Resources" (April 15th - 17th, 2026), the Volkswagen Foundation intends to fund up to four scientific symposia aimed on analysing the causes, consequences and challenges of strained financial, material and human resources on society and economy.

The symposia can, but are not limited, to focus on topics, such as

- Discussions about the future of Western Market Economies facing changing economic conditions and scarcity
- Fundamental budgetary and investment policy issues in the context of a limited supply of resources (discussions about 'debt brake', investment and industrial policy)
- Effects of decreasing demographics and migration developments on labour markets and society
- Imminent budget cuts on development policies and their economic consequences

Since the analysis of scarcity and output maximisation is one of the primary research interests of economics, economists are the main target of this call. However, related sub-disciplines such as political economy, sociology of work, human geography or economic history are welcome to apply for the theme week, too. To bring together different perspectives on this multifaceted topic, interdisciplinary applications are particularly encouraged. In so doing, the foundation aims to contribute to networking both within the specialist community as a whole and across disciplinary boundaries.

The foundation explicitly intends to bring together scientists and partners outside of academia to jointly discuss resource-related topics. As a shortage of skilled labour, the increased demand for investment and raw materials and high energy costs represent current challenges for companies, public authorities and NGOs, it is also possible to involve relevant practitioners who can contribute their distinct perspective to the symposia.

2 Scope of Funding

Symposia funded by the Foundation take place at the Xplanatorium Herrenhausen Palace, Hanover/Germany, within the framework of the Volkswagen Foundation's "Theme Weeks". The venue offers meeting and conference rooms of different sizes, together with a professional organizational as well as technical infrastructure. In addition to the provision of this infrastructure and handling of organizational tasks, symposia are supported with funds covering personnel as well as non-personnel or publication costs. Support can be made available for events with usually up to 50 participants.

Funds may be requested to cover the following costs:

Personnel costs

- Funds for student assistants during preparation, running and follow-up of the event in an amount not exceeding 7,000 EUR.

Travel costs

- Expenses for accommodation for all participants (please estimate 140 EUR per night/person).
- Travel expenses for all participants. Please also refer to the Volkswagen Foundation's Recommendations for sustainable traveling (see section 6). Please estimate the following sums per participant in the cost plan for travel to and from the event in total (please note that only costs actually incurred can be settled with the Foundation after the event):
 - Participants from Germany: 250 EUR
 - Participants from the rest of Europe: 500 EUR
 - Participants from the east coast of the USA: 1,000 EUR
 - Participants from the rest of the world: 1,500 EUR

Non-personnel costs, e.g.

- Expense allowances for freelancers (e.g. journalists or moderators), who are actively involved in the symposium.
- Consumables in an amount not exceeding 500 EUR.
- Funds for childcare costs, e.g. travel expenses, accommodation costs or allowances for caregivers. If you apply for funds for childcare, please briefly explain how it is planned and how the costs are composed.
- Publication expenses. The Foundation expects that the results of the meeting will be published online and open access. Typical conference proceedings and pure print publications will not be funded.

As part of the grant, the following services are provided by the Volkswagen Foundation:

- hotel reservations (please do not make any bookings yourself),
- provision of conference equipment at the Xplanatorium Herrenhausen Palace, Hanover/Germany,
- catering at the Xplanatorium Herrenhausen Palace, Hanover/Germany.

Joint Program

Applicants are requested to include the following slots into their program, in order to foster exchange and networking of the participants of all symposia among each other and with representatives of the Foundation:

- Wednesday, April 15th: 9:30 am to 1 pm (welcome notes, get-to-know each other, introduction to the symposia, lunch),
- Thursday, April 16th: 12:00 pm to 1 pm (lunch) and from 4 pm onwards (joint activity and dinner),
- Friday, April 17th: 12:00 pm to 1 pm (closing remarks and lunch).

Please note that the joint program will be in English if the working language of at least one of the funded symposia is English.

3 Application and Selection Procedure

Eligible to apply are researchers from all fields and at all career levels after the PhD, who are employed at a scientific institution in Germany. Researchers from foreign institutions can be involved as co-applicants. Applications can be submitted in German or English.

3.1 Procedure

A decision is usually made within two months of the deadline. In addition to the objectives of the respective theme week described in section 1, the scientific quality of the event, the use of innovative and interactive event formats, and the conclusiveness of the overall concept are decisive factors in the review process. The Foundation also expects active participation of PhD students and postdocs as well as a significant inclusion of female scientists among both the speakers and the participants.

4 Information on the Application

4.1 Our Funding Platform

Applications and short proposals have to be submitted via the Volkswagen Foundation's [portal](#). All templates (template, CV, 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 all applicants (PI, co-PIs, etc.) register early on in the process. Co-applicant(s) can only be invited to work on an application if they have registered. Please note that there is a maximum of four co-applicants per application.

For further support please contact support@volkswagenstiftung.de.

4.2 Information on Enclosures

4.2.1 Project Description

Please use the template available for download at the funding platform or on the website for the respective programme announcement. Please adhere to the page respectively word limit. .

4.2.2 Expenditure Plan

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

Please note that funding is only granted to one institution, which is why you should submit a joint budget plan even in case of multiple applicants

4.2.3 Curricula Vitae

Please submit the curricula vitae of all applicants in tabular, narrative form, using the template available for download at the funding platform or on the website for the respective programme announcement.

4.2.4 Planned Program

Upload the planned program in free format as a PDF in the portal under "Program".

4.3 Further Information

4.3.1 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](#)).

Please note: In the event of funding, the '[Additional Funding for the Preparation and Storage of Research Data \(Open Science\)](#)' service is available for the subsequent processing of research data from the project.

4.3.2 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

Yassin Abou El Fadil

Email: AbouElFadil@volkswagenstiftung.de

Phone: +49 511 83 81 – 333

For administrative/organisational issues:

Maria-Luisa Förster

Email: Foerster@volkswagenstiftung.de

Phone: +49 511 83 81 – 385

VolkswagenStiftung
Kastanienallee 35
30519 Hannover, GERMANY

6 Further Information

- [Website VolkswagenStiftung](#)
- [Website programme announcement](#)
- [FAQ and Service \(including download section\)](#)
- [Influence of Generative AI on Research and the Volkswagen Foundation's Funding Activities](#)
- [Recommendations for Sustainable Travel](#)