

Initiative**Evolutionary Biology****Contact****Dr. Daniela Kruschel**

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www.volkswagenstiftung.de**Submission of proposals from
postdocs****Deadline: April 15, 2011****1. Objectives**

The origin and development of the diversity of species represents one of the greatest challenges to fundamental research in the whole field of biology. In order to comprehend the dynamics within and between populations in space and time, it is essential to reach a better understanding of the processes that result in the evolutionary adaptation of species by mutation and natural selection.

This diverse and at the same time highly topical field is still relatively under-represented at most German universities. Hence, the Volkswagen Foundation is seeking to strengthen this research area in Germany. In principle funding is open to all fields of research related to the topic. This includes the entire field of the natural sciences as well as the social sciences and the humanities (e.g. philosophy or philosophy of science). The rationale of the initiative is to generate impulses for both research and higher education; thus, the funding scheme comprises different elements that can be combined with one another in the sense of a modular concept. Since the initiative is aimed primarily at bringing about changes in (university) structures and at providing career perspectives, research projects are only funded in the form of fellowships to young scientists.

2. Funding Opportunities**Support for Postdoctoral Students**

The Foundation provides support for postdocs as an incentive to direct their research to evolutionary biology. The funding is aimed at highly talented young scientists who have already demonstrated their qualification by previous excellent performance and now intend to advance their scientific career under this funding scheme. Researchers from other backgrounds who are interested in evolutionary biology are particularly encouraged to apply. Projects mainly focusing on the development of techniques and methods cannot be funded.

General Framework

Funding can be provided for young scientists with one to five years of research experience after finishing their PhD. At an early career stage (i.e. one to three years post-PhD) the usual funding period is three years, more advanced fellows can apply for a five-year fellowship. Particularly for those candidates it is expected that some teaching and administrative duties are included into the concept to help the candidates gaining experience in these fields as well.

The Volkswagen Foundation considers mobility as a central aspect for a successful academic career. Therefore a change of location including a change of the academic environment is an obligatory requirement for the candidates in order to be eligible to apply. In general, this means that the applicant must not have been working longer than six months in the host laboratory envisaged. Only advanced candidates who have already been working at different institutions and now want to focus on the implementation of a first independent group at a German institution can be exempt from that rule. It is recommended to contact the offices of the Foundation for clarification before submitting an application.

It is also possible to submit joint proposals for projects between postdoctoral students. The relevance and added value of the cooperation between the applicants has to be substantiated in the proposal. Cooperation between post-docs and senior scientists can be funded as well, however, according to the goal of the funding initiative, the major part of the grant should go to the younger applicant. Support for the senior partner should be on the level of a PhD position.

Funding can be provided for the applicant's salary (usually full position), consumables, travel expenses and small equipment. In projects with particularly high costs for consumables (e.g. extensive sequencing) a significant contribution of the host lab is expected. Candidates with at least two years of research experience can also apply for salaries for up to two PhD-students or student helpers.

Connection to Scientific Institutions, Transnational Mobility

Applications can be submitted by applicants from Germany or from abroad, irrespective of nationality, provided a German institution is involved. Parts of the project can be performed outside Germany, however, a substantial part of the project has to be carried out in a German lab. For a three year project the return to Germany is expected at the end of the second year. For a five year funding the return has to take place during the third year to allow integration into a German research institution during the funding period. In these cases, supporting statements of two potential host institutions in Germany have to be provided with the application. Funds for this second funding phase will only be released upon return to Germany.

The host lab may be located either at a university or a non-university institution. However, in the latter case the host institution has to cover 50% of the funds applied for. A supporting letter confirming the contribution has to be provided at the time of application.

Please consider these requirements and the “General Aspects” listed below. When preparing the application please follow the instructions of the application form (see below). Applications which do not meet these requirements cannot be accepted.

General Aspects

In all cases, the funds are provided as individual-related grants to the applicant. Therefore the Foundation expects that the applications are drawn up by the applicants themselves. This has to be confirmed by signature (see application form).

It is expected that the application contains an introductory paragraph about the relevance of the proposed project for the broader field of research. The paragraph is supposed to explain the expected contribution of the project to extending the current state of knowledge and to comment on the integration of the project into existing theoretical concepts.

The Volkswagen Foundation considers communication between science and society an important topic and therefore expects younger scientists to develop the necessary skills to explain their research to a broader lay audience. Therefore the application has to include a one page draft for a newspaper article (in English) about the applicant’s field of research.

In general it is possible to submit several applications for the same host lab. However, it is recommended to contact the offices of the Foundation beforehand to clarify eligibility.

Dual Career Option

The Foundation strives to improve the compatibility of family and professional career and thus provides a “dual career-option” for couples with children. Hence, an accompanying partner working in academia may submit his/her application with affiliation to a scientific institution at the fellow’s location. Applications from all disciplines, not only evolutionary biology, are eligible. The Foundation takes its decisions based on peer-review. However, a grant to an accompanying partner is only possible in conjunction with an fellowship awarded in evolutionary biology. The partner can apply for his/her salary and limited non-personnel costs. The duration of the partner’s project may not exceed the fellowship. Generally, the dual career application should be submitted at the same time as the main application. A later application is only possible if the remaining duration of the project funded within this initiative is at least two years. Please include in your CV the date of birth of your

child/children. It is recommended to contact the offices of the Foundation prior to submitting the application.

The **next deadline** for the submission of proposals is **April 15, 2011**.

Submissions of proposals for
symposia and summer
schools

any time

Symposia, Symposia Series

Funding will be made available for symposia that promote scientific exchange. The number of participants should not exceed 60 persons and it is expected that such symposia will comprise participants from several countries and entail the active participation of junior scientists. In view of the initiative's objectives the largest contingent should come from Germany, and the venue chosen should be in Germany as well. Furthermore, series of symposia with overlapping participation - including persons from other European countries - may be eligible for funding in order to promote the building of networks. All applications should correspond to the general guidelines laid down for the funding initiative "Symposia and Summer Schools".

Summer Schools, Summer School Series

In order to promote academic education and further training of junior scientists in the different areas of evolutionary biology, the Foundation also provides funding for summer schools and summer school series. A substantial number of participants should come from Germany and the venue chosen should be in Germany as well. However, in view of the aim to achieve more intensive interaction with other European countries, scientists from these countries should also be involved. In all cases the teaching staff should represent different nationalities and an appropriate breadth of the thematic spectrum. Applications should correspond to the guidelines laid down for the funding initiative "Symposia and Summer Schools".

Support for Interaction between Young Scientists

In order to promote the interaction between PhD students and postdocs support may be provided for the short-term exchange of research staff, as well as for meetings of PhD students from which German doctoral students will benefit.

Structural Improvements at German Universities

In order to better anchor the concepts of evolutionary biology in university courses the Volkswagen Foundation had launched a competition giving the universities the possibility to apply for funding of innovative training concepts. After two "Call for Proposals" which resulted in five concepts funded this funding line has been closed.

Electronic Application

Please use the Foundation's electronic application system in the internet.

portal.volkswagenstiftung.de

Please remember to print the cover sheet provided, sign it and send it to us. Instructions on the electronic application system are provided online and on the following page.

3. How to Apply

Applications are to be written in English and can be submitted to the Volkswagen Foundation at anytime (symposia and summer schools) or at the stated deadline (Fellowships). The following aspects are important evaluation criteria and should be covered in the description of the proposed research:

- General relevance of the project for the broader field of research;
- International state of research;
- Own previous work;
- Description of project including objectives, implementation and methods, work and time schedule;
- Information about host laboratory including thematic focus and reasons for choice of host institution/group;
- Information about teaching obligations and administrative duties;
- Other funding received (title, duration, scope of funding and funding institution).

All applications have to be submitted using the Foundation's electronic application system. The following data have to be completed directly in the electronic application form:

- information on the applicant, grant recipient (i. e. German home institute), and host institute abroad;
- Project duration and project title;
- budget (scientific personnel including salary category and actual amount required, including taxes and social security and duration. The applicant may include child care cost, travel as well as fees and material expenses. However, funds for major equipment will only be considered in well substantiated cases, if so for equipment above EUR 10,000 one quotation each is required).

The following documents (pdf files) have to be uploaded using the stated type of enclosure, please use an explanatory file name as description for the type of document (e.g CV, PhD certificate):

- Curriculum vitae and citations for the five most important publications of all applicants. Each CV should not exceed two pages and should include full addresses. A copy of the main applicant PhD certificate (or temporary certificate) should be provided;
- Summary in German and English (approx. 150 words);
- description of the proposed research with references (max. 13 numbered pages; minimum 11pt font and 2 cm page margins);
- Statement of leader of the main host group;
- Statement of leader of host group abroad and of the groups envisaged as host labs upon the return to Germany (each if applicable);
- For applicants from non-university institutions: statement about financial support of the project covering 50% of the costs applied for.

The following documents have to be uploaded using "Other Enclosures":

- Letter of motivation (one page);

- One page “newspaper article” about your research;
- Budget justification.

The Foundation must be informed if the same or a similar application is pending or will be submitted to another funding institution. The Foundation can provide funds solely to scientific institutions. Likewise, grants to postdocs are only awarded via a scientific institution within Germany. In the event that the proposed recipients of funds are not affiliated with universities or otherwise recognized research institutions, applications must also contain details of the legal form, statutes, the composition of executive bodies, tax status, budget and auditing arrangements of the institution to be funded. If available, an annual report should also be provided.

Electronic Application Made Easy – Instruction and Tips

The Volkswagen Foundation accepts applications for Evolutionary Biology via its electronic application system portal.volkswagenstiftung.de. Please note that only registered users of the electronic application system have access to application data, can submit applications and receive corresponding e-mail messages. Hence, it is required for applicants with project responsibility to register him/herself or to ask a co-worker to register in his/her name with the proper e-mail address.

Please follow the six steps to compile and submit your application:

- If you are a new user please **register** at the application portal with your name, your e-mail address and your own password. When registering you will be asked about your work address details. Subsequently, you must **activate** your account using the link sent by e-mail. If you already have a user account you can immediately **login** using your e-mail address and password.
- The function **new application** starts the selection of the corresponding funding initiative (here: Evolutionary Biology), the application type (here: Support for Postdoctoral Students; for Symposia and Summer Schools please proceed directly with “next”), and the grant-receiving institution.
- Now – and later on – you can interrupt the compilation of your application at any time. As required you can logout and login again.
- Please check whether the pre-filled data on the applicant are correct. Furthermore, we need application data (e. g. project title, duration) and the budget. You are asked to enter all information in the respective forms. Please note that the **save** button does not transfer any data to the Foundation. You are able to revise all data until the submission of your application. Please keep in mind to read and **accept** the legal statement. If you wish you can generate a PDF of the filled-in forms for verification and for your filing.
- Under enclosures you are able to **upload files** as required according to the checklist in the „Information for Applicants“. Only PDF files are accepted. Before submission all files can be exchanged for new versions.

Technical Support

Please contact
support@volkswagenstiftung.de
for any technical questions when
using the electronic application
system

- Once your application is complete you can **submit** it electronically to the Foundation. Additionally, a PDF generation of a **cover sheet** for print-out is required. Add your **signature** and send it by postal mail.

In the course of processing your application the Foundation might request additional information. The function **new supplement** is used to upload and submit the respective files.