



Programme Information

Georg Forster Research Fellowships

for postdocs and experienced researchers

In providing Georg Forster Research Fellowships for postdocs and experienced researchers, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation enables highly-qualified scientists and scholars in all disciplines from developing and transition countries (excluding People's Republic of China and India, c.f. detailed [list of programme countries](#)) to spend extended periods of research in Germany. The planned research outline must deal with issues that are **of major relevance to the sustainable development of the candidate's country or region of origin** and contribute towards the achievement of the UN's [17 Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#).

Postdocs are eligible to apply **up to four years after completing their doctorates** for a sponsorship period of 6–24 months. Experienced researchers can apply **up to twelve years after completing their doctorates** for a sponsorship period of 6–18 months. Short-term visits for study and training purposes or for attending conferences are not eligible for sponsorship.

The duration of the fellowship may be divided up into a maximum of three visits, with each visit lasting at least three months. The research fellowship must be used within 36 months of commencement and within 48 months if it is extended (for further information on sponsorship, see "Fellowship specifications" section).

Funding is provided by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). As the programme is intended to actively contribute towards achieving UN Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender Equality), applications from women are particularly welcome. Applications from people from [Least Developed Countries \(LDC\) according to UN definition](#) are also particularly welcome. Integrating a wide variety of perspectives increases research quality and responds to the needs of society as a whole. Equal opportunities, and therefore gender equality, are indispensable factors of comprehensive research.

The research is carried out in cooperation with academic hosts at research institutions in Germany. Candidates choose their own topic of research and their host in Germany. Details of the research outline including information on the intended duration of the fellowship and division of visits, if applicable, must be agreed with the intended host before applying.

Decisions to award fellowships are based on the assessment of the applicant's academic qualification, their contribution to development-related research and their future potential. An individual's personal and educational background – including and especially with regard to equal opportunities and accessibility – are also taken into account. There are no quotas for individual disciplines or countries.



Academic qualification is assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

- academic record and academic performance to date (mobility, determination, breadth of research activities, academic productivity)
- quality of key publications specified in the application (originality, degree of innovation, applicant’s contribution in cases of multiple authorship)
- originality and innovation potential of the suggested research outline (significance for the advancement of the discipline, convincing choice of academic methods, prospects for academic development of the applicant, clear focus and feasibility within the requested funding period, feasibility of realization at the host institution) and relevance for the sustainable development of the country or region of origin
- the applicant’s future potential (academic potential, further academic development, career prospects)
- applicants who are applying as **experienced researchers** are also expected to have their own clearly defined personal academic profile. This means they should usually already be working at least as an assistant professor, lead a junior research group or be able to document several years of independent research work corresponding to the basis for eligibility for a professorship.

Applications are assessed on the basis of a peer review process in relation to the career level of applicants (time after completion of the doctorate). The final decision on all applications for both programmes is taken by a selection committee within the framework of the funding available (for further information on the selection procedure, see “Application and selection procedure”).

Fellowship specifications:

The Humboldt Foundation awards a monthly fellowship rate of **2,700 EUR for postdocs** and **3,200 EUR for experienced researchers** plus a **mobility allowance** and a **subsidy towards the cost of medical and liability insurance**. A **lump sum for travel expenses** as well as an **initial subsidy** are also paid. Before the start of the fellowship, the Humboldt Foundation provides an **intensive language course in Germany** lasting two or four months (including for accompanying partners).

In addition, a **family allowance** for accompanying partners and/or children under 18 will be granted if they are staying in Germany for at least three months. The following benefits may also be applied for:

- subsidy towards the cost of medical and liability insurance for an accompanying partner and/or children under the age of 18;
- a flat-rate allowance for single parents with accompanying children;
- extension of the fellowship for research fellows accompanied by children or for a maternity period.

There are further support options for research fellows with **disabilities or chronic illnesses**.



For a fellowship with a sponsorship period of more than six months, **research stays outside Germany** are possible under certain conditions, provided that these are required for carrying out the research (up to 25% of the planned total sponsorship period).

Hosts in Germany can apply for an **allowance for research costs** to the value of 800 EUR per month (natural sciences, life sciences and engineering) or 500 EUR (humanities and social sciences).

Upon successful completion of the research stay, various forms of **alumni sponsorship** can be granted to alumni who are still actively involved in research, particularly for promoting contact with cooperation partners in Germany.

Details on the above-mentioned benefits and further information on fellowship modalities and the research stay in Germany can be found in the Humboldt Foundation's [Guidelines and Information for Research Fellows](#).

The Humboldt Foundation assumes that candidates and funding recipients will abide the [Rules of Good Scientific Practice](#) and all legally binding principles of scientific ethics.

Application requirements

1. **Doctorate** or comparable academic degree (Ph.D., C.Sc. or equivalent) completed (the last academic achievement) no longer than four years prior to the date of application for postdocs or twelve years for experienced researchers. If it is not possible or customary to take a doctorate in the candidate's subject or country, an application may be submitted up to 16 years after completing a Master's or Diploma degree, provided that the publication record is commensurate with the candidate's career stage;
2. **Academic publications** in journals and by publishers reviewed according to international standards, commensurate with the applicant's career level after completion of the doctorate;
3. Choice of a **research outline of major relevance to the sustainable development of the country of origin or region of origin**;
4. **Confirmation that research facilities are available and mentoring agreement** and a **detailed expert's statement** from an academic host at a research institution in Germany;
5. Two **expert reviews** from important collaborative partners and/or academics from the candidate's own institute and other institutions, if possible, also from outside the country of origin. Postdocs should usually request one of the expert reviews from the doctoral thesis supervisor;
6. Necessary **language skills**: humanities or social sciences and medicine: good knowledge of German if it is necessary to carry out the research successfully; otherwise, good knowledge of English; natural sciences and engineering: good knowledge of German or English;
7. **Citizenship** of one of the [programme countries](#);



8. **Long-term principal place of residence and work** in a programme country. The following mobility rules apply (key date: submission of application):

- Applicants must have been living and working in one of the programme countries for at least 12 months in the last 18 month period. In the assessment, all stays outside the listed programme countries are taken into account, regardless of their duration and reason. Any person who, regardless of their place of residence, has supported themselves for more than 6 out of the last 18 months with financing from German institutions or who has worked on a doctoral project at an institution in Germany is not eligible to apply.
- Willingness to return to a programme country to contribute to the exchange of methods and knowledge there.
- Experienced researchers only: applicants who are not staying in one of the programme countries at the time of application must additionally have a permanent employment in a programme country.

Candidates who have completed their school education and one university degree or one university degree and their doctorate in Germany are eligible to apply provided that their habitual place of work and residence has been located in a developing or transition country on the assumption of permanence and at least for the last five years. Visit the [Questions and answers](#) on the website for additional information.

Any person who has already been sponsored by the Humboldt Foundation in the form of a research fellowship or research award cannot apply for a Georg Forster Research Fellowship. They should turn to the Foundation's Alumni Programme for support for further research stays.

Application and selection procedure

Applications can only be submitted online. The fully completed application form, including the necessary additional documents, should be submitted at least four to seven months ahead of the prospective selection date. Visit the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation's website for further information on the [online application process](#) and all necessary documents as well as access to the online application form. A confirmation of receipt will be issued after the application has been submitted.

The expert reviews and the host's confidential statement must be uploaded by the named academics directly to the application form. The applicant will send the link needed to access the application form via e-mail to the designated persons. It is only possible to submit the application once all documents have been uploaded completely.

Applicants are responsible for ensuring that their documents are complete. Incomplete applications will be excluded from the selection procedure.

After a review of the documents, applicants will be notified about the proposed selection date. Two independent peer reviews are usually then obtained. On this basis, a selection committee composed of about 20 academics from all disciplines reaches a decision on approving research fellowships.



Information on the composition of the [selection committee](#) is available on the Humboldt Foundation's website. The selection committee meets every year, in February, June and October.

If funding is awarded, sponsorship in Germany begins on the start date given in the application or on the earliest possible date after that. Under certain conditions, the start date may be postponed for up to 12 months.

If the selection decision is negative, an informal request can be made via email for the factors that led to the rejection of the application to be shared with the applicants and their hosts. It is not possible to appeal. However, after rejection a revised application may be submitted as long as fundamental aspects of the rejected application have been significantly improved. In the case of unanimously rejected applications, a new application will be accepted only after 18 months.

Further information on the selection procedure can be found in the [Questions and answers](#) on the Humboldt Foundation's website as well as in the application form notes.