

# BMBF Eligibility Requirements for T-AP applicants based in Germany

## Federal Ministry of Education and Research

### Announcement

#### **Regulations governing the funding of projects on Recovery, Renewal and Resilience in a Post-Pandemic World as part of the Trans-Atlantic Platform Social Sciences and Humanities Call for Proposals: Recovery, Renewal and Resilience in a Post-Pandemic World**

of 18 March 2021

## **1 Aim and purpose of funding, legal basis**

### 1.1 Aim and purpose of funding

With its Humanities and Social Sciences Framework Programme “Understanding Society – Shaping the Future” (2019 – 2025), the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) addresses pressing social challenges of our times (see: <https://www.geistes-und-sozialwissenschaften-bmbf.de/en/index.html>). Given the international dimension of the societal challenges currently being faced, BMBF attaches great importance to the internationalisation of the humanities and social sciences.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a major crisis that touches on all aspects of health, social, economic, political, and cultural life. From major disruptions to the global economy through to the dislocation of normal interpersonal relationships, no society, business, community, family or individual has escaped its impacts. As people and society are at the heart of the pandemic, an effective post pandemic recovery, must be strongly informed by insights and evidence from social sciences and humanities (SSH).

The programme’s funding objective is thus joint multilateral research on the medium and long-term societal impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic from a comparative perspective, both international and transnational. It aims at research cooperation between universities and non-university research institutions in Germany and European, South American, North American and South African universities and research institutions along with the integration of researchers from German institutions and their topics into multilateral research collaborations. The ultimate goal is transnational exchange and transfer of knowledge.

With its grants awarded under the Trans-Atlantic Platform Recovery, Renewal and Resilience in a Post-Pandemic World Call for Proposals (T-AP RRR Call), BMBF aims to fund German sub-projects which, as part of a research collaboration with international project partners, close key gaps in our understanding of the dynamic and complex interaction of medium and long-term societal effects of COVID-19 pandemic. As a network of research funders, the Trans-Atlantic Platform (T-AP) promotes transatlantic research

cooperation in the social sciences and humanities with BMBF participation. The official funding announcement complete with the full announcement text (including a more detailed description of the funding object) will be published in English on the T-AP website: <https://www.transatlanticplatform.com/>.

As part of the T-AP Recovery, Renewal and Resilience in a Post-Pandemic World Call for Proposals, social scientists and humanities experts from more than 20 countries are invited to submit international project proposals addressing the topic of Recovery, Renewal and Resilience in a Post-Pandemic World from either a social and/or humanities perspective and in that context, address the pressing societal challenges being faced on both sides of the Atlantic (see 2. below). The international projects are intended to advance knowledge of how to mitigate the negative societal effects of COVID-19 pandemic and support recovery and renewal in a post-pandemic world.

Funding for applicant institutions is subject to the general rules of the T-AP Recovery, Renewal and Resilience in a Post-Pandemic World Call for Proposals (see <https://www.transatlanticplatform.com/>) and the prevailing regulations of the respective partner states. The regulations set out below apply specifically to potential applicants from Germany when applying for funding from BMBF.

It is expected that the research results will be communicated to the general public. It is thus essential that the instruments and formats to be used in knowledge transfer are listed.

There is no state aid involved.

## 1.2 Legal basis

The Federal Government will award grants in accordance with these funding regulations, sections 23 and 44 of the Federal Budget Code (BHO) and the administrative regulations adopted thereunder as well as the BMBF's regulations governing applications for expenditure-based grants (AZA/ AZAP/ AZA) and/or cost-based grants (AZK). There is no legal entitlement to a grant. The granting authority will decide freely after due assessment of the circumstances within the framework of the budget funds available.

## 2 Object of funding

The object of funding is research projects of universities and research institutions belonging to international project partnerships which address relevant research questions in relation to the topic of Recovery, Renewal and Resilience in a Post-Pandemic World.

Applicants are required to submit novel interdisciplinary and significant SSH research proposals that address one or more of the following five challenges:

- Reducing inequalities and vulnerabilities
- Building a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable society
- Fostering democratic governance and political participation
- Advancing responsible and inclusive digital innovation

- Ensuring effective and accurate communication and media

A focus on these five challenges will leverage SSH research to understand and address the complex societal effects of COVID-19 pandemic, inform mitigation efforts and thus, contribute to a more equitable, resilient and sustainable future. Key to the approach is the added value of new perspectives and insights generated by transnational and interdisciplinary collaborations.

Research projects must meet at least one of the following goals:

- assess the mid to long-term economic, social, political, health, educational, environmental, technological, legal, psychological, or cultural impacts and ethical implications of the COVID-19 pandemic from a trans-Atlantic comparative (cross-country) perspective;
- generate new comparative perspectives and insights that would inform development of appropriate and effective responses and interventions to combat COVID-19; and/or
- assess the effectiveness as well as transferability and unintended or long-term effects of responses and interventions by government and other societal actors to these impacts and the lessons arising from them for recovery and renewal.

A project partnership must comprise at least three eligible partners from at least three different countries participating in the T-AP Recovery, Renewal and Resilience in a Post-Pandemic World Call for Proposals. In addition to Germany, these are Brazil, Canada, Columbia, Croatia, Finland, France, Poland, South Africa, Switzerland, the UK and the US.<sup>1</sup> A project partnership must also comprise at least one partner from Europe and at least one from either South or North America.

The project period must be a minimum 24 months but not exceed 36 months. In accordance with the agreements reached with the T-AP, BMBF provides **funding solely for research projects conducted by German research institutions.**

### 3 Funding recipients

Eligible applicants comprise universities, non-university research institutions, other institutions and public and private institutions which meet the funding purpose and the funding requirements. Participation by researchers in small fringe subjects is welcomed. Applicants are required to have an entity in Germany serving the non-commercial activities of the funding recipient (university, research institution) at the time of payment of the grant.

Research institutions which receive basic funding from the Federal Government and/or the *Länder* can, under certain conditions, be granted project funding supplementary to their institutional funding to cover additional project-related expenditure or costs.

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<sup>1</sup> The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) Canada, which is participating in the T-AP call for joint research on Recovery, Renewal and Resilience in a Post-Pandemic World, also provides funding for applicants from Belize, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay and Peru. See the IDRC guidelines, which are available at: <https://www.transatlanticplatform.com/>.

Concerning the conditions for when state aid is or is not deemed to be involved and the extent to which funding can be provided without constituting aid, please consult the Community Framework for State Aid for R&D&I (research, development and innovation).<sup>2</sup>

Collaboration with foreign universities, non-university research institutions and other partner institutions in a partnership comprising at least three countries participating in the T-AP Recovery, Renewal and Resilience in a Post-Pandemic World Call for Proposals is required. Such institutions cannot, however, receive funding.

#### **4 Special prerequisites for funding**

To receive funding from BMBF, applicants must meet the requirements of the T-AP Recovery, Renewal and Resilience in a Post-Pandemic World Call for Proposals and those of these regulations. Only multilateral research projects are eligible for funding. The proposal for the multilateral research project (see 7.2.1) must be submitted, via a coordinator (lead principal investigator), by at least three funding-eligible institutions from at least three different countries participating in the call for proposals. For each multilateral research collaboration, a coordinator (lead principal investigator) must be named who represents the research collaboration externally and takes charge of internal organizational processes. The lead principal investigator is responsible for the online submission of the proposal via the SAGe online application system (see 7.2.1). The project manager (*Projektleiter*) of the BMBF-funded project must comply with the reporting obligations set out by the BMBF.

The provision of funding assumes the willingness of the applicant to participate in evaluation measures and activities carried through by the project management agency (PT) and external experts.

The partners in a collaborative project must set out the terms of cooperation in a written agreement. All the collaboration partners including those which are research institutions within the meaning of Article 2 (83) GBER must ensure that companies do not receive any form of indirect aid as part of the collaboration. The provisions contained in 2.2. of the EU R&D&I Framework must be observed. Before a funding decision on a collaborative project is taken, the cooperation partners must prove that they have reached a basic consensus on further criteria stipulated by the BMBF (cf. BMBF leaflet No. 0110).<sup>3</sup>

For further information, please refer to the FAQs on the website: [https://www.geistes-und-sozialwissenschaften-bmbf.de/files/FAQ\\_T-AP\\_RRR\\_Call.pdf](https://www.geistes-und-sozialwissenschaften-bmbf.de/files/FAQ_T-AP_RRR_Call.pdf).

#### **5 Type, scope and rates of funding**

Funding will be awarded in the form of non-repayable project grants. Funding of up to €300,000, including a flat-rate project grant (*Projektpauschale*), can be applied for per project. Grants are awarded for a minimum period of 24 months and a maximum of 36 months.

<sup>2</sup> Commission communication (2014/C 198/01) of 27 June 2014 (OJ C 198 of 27 June 2014 p.1 ff.) as amended by Commission communication C(2020) 4355 final of 2 July 2020 (OJ C 224 of 8 July 2020, p. 2), in particular section 2.

<sup>3</sup> [https://foerderportal.bund.de/easy/easy\\_index.php?auswahl=easy\\_formulare](https://foerderportal.bund.de/easy/easy_index.php?auswahl=easy_formulare) (under BMBF and then under Allgemeine Vordrucke und Vorlagen für Berichte).

Grants for higher education institutions, research and science institutions and similar establishments that do not fall into the category of economic activities are calculated on the basis of the eligible project-related expenditure (in the case of the Helmholtz centres and Fraunhofer, eligible project-related costs), which can be awarded up to 100% coverage in individual cases, taking legislation on state aid into account.

In the case of non-commercial research projects at universities, a flat-rate grant (*Projektpauschale*) amounting to 20% of total expenditure funded by the BMBF will be awarded in addition to the eligible expenditure.

The BMBF's regulations governing applications for expenditure-based grants (AZA) and/or cost-based grants (AZK) provide the basis for determining the expenditure/costs eligible for funding.

Grants can be provided to cover expenditure and costs for:

- Staffing expenditure/costs
- Student and/or research assistants
- Award of contracts
- Material expenses
- Funding to hold/participate in workshops and seminars, and for effective publication of the project results
- Travel expenses/costs

## 6 Other terms and conditions

The *Nebenbestimmungen für Zuwendungen auf Kostenbasis des Bundesministeriums für Bildung und Forschung an gewerbliche Unternehmen für Forschungs- und Entwicklungsvorhaben* (NKBF 2017) (Auxiliary Terms and Conditions for Funds Provided by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research to Commercial Companies for Research and Development Projects on a Cost Basis) will be part of the notification of award for grants on a cost basis.

Notification of award for grants on an expenditure basis will include the *Nebenbestimmungen für Zuwendungen auf Ausgabenbasis des Bundesministeriums für Bildung und Forschung zur Projektförderung* (NABF) (Auxiliary Terms and Conditions for Funds Provided by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research for the Promotion of Projects on an Expenditure Basis). The *Allgemeine Nebenbestimmungen für Zuwendungen zur Projektförderung an Gebietskörperschaften und Zusammenschlüsse von Gebietskörperschaften* (General Auxiliary Conditions for Project Grants Awarded to Territorial Authorities and Associations of Territorial Authorities – ANBest-GK) will be part of the notification of award for grants on an expenditure basis. For the purpose of conducting progress reviews within the meaning of administrative regulation 11a pertaining to section 44 of the Federal Budget Code (BHO), funding recipients are required to provide the BMBF or reviewing institutions with the data necessary for the progress review without delay. The information will be used exclusively for the purposes of supporting research and any subsequent evaluation; it will be treated confidentially and published in anonymized form, so that it is not possible to trace it back to any individual persons or organizations.

Funding recipients are expected to ensure open electronic access if they publish the results of the research project in a scientific journal. This can be done by publishing the article in an online journal that is accessible to the public free of charge. If the article does not initially appear in an online journal that is accessible to the public free of charge, the article should subsequently be made accessible to the public online free of charge, following a reasonable embargo period where appropriate (secondary publication). The embargo period for a secondary publication should not exceed twelve months. The BMBF expressly welcomes open access secondary publication of scientific monographs resulting from the project.

## 7 Procedure

### 7.1 Involvement of a project management organization, application documents, other documents and use of the electronic application system

Preliminary remark: The T-AP has commissioned the São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP) to serve as the Call Secretariat to handle centralised submission of project proposals, the review process and management of the electronic application system (SAGe) for the T-AP Recovery, Renewal and Resilience in a Post-Pandemic World Call for Proposals.

All documentation, such as the T-AP Recovery, Renewal and Resilience in a Post-Pandemic World Call for Proposals, the guidelines for all applicants, special national terms and conditions, evaluation criteria, etc., instructions for submitting a project proposal (e.g. Guidelines on how to submit an application) and also templates (such as the Application Template and the Summary Budget Table) can be viewed at: <https://www.transatlanticplatform.com/>.

The BMBF has currently entrusted the following project management organization (PT) with implementing the funding measure:

DLR Project Management Agency  
Society, Innovation, Technology  
Gesellschaften der Zukunft, Soziale Innovationen  
Heinrich-Konen-Str. 1  
53227 Bonn  
Germany

Contact persons:

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Any modifications will be announced in the *Bundesanzeiger* (Federal Gazette) or in another suitable form.

It is strongly recommended that the project management agency be contacted before submitting a proposal or formal application.

Application forms, guidelines, leaflets, information and auxiliary terms and conditions are available online at

[https://foerderportal.bund.de/easy/easy\\_index.php?auswahl=formularschrank\\_foerderportal&formularschrank=bmbf](https://foerderportal.bund.de/easy/easy_index.php?auswahl=formularschrank_foerderportal&formularschrank=bmbf)

or can be obtained directly from the above-mentioned project management organization.

When generating project proposals for an international research collaboration, the SAGe electronic application system (hosted by the São Paulo Research Foundation - FAPESP) must be used (see 7.2.1). The application system is available at:

<https://www.transatlanticplatform.com/>

The “easy-Online” electronic application system must be used to generate formal funding applications (after positive external review and as requested by the DLR Project Management Agency, see 7.2.2) (<https://foerderportal.bund.de/easyonline>).

## 7.2 Two-phase application procedure

The application procedure consists of two phases.

### 7.2.1 Submission and selection of project proposals

In the first phase of the application procedure, the lead principal investigator must submit an Intention to Submit Form in English

no later than midnight (UTC/GMT -3) on 14 June 2021

in electronic form. In accordance with the T-AP Recovery, Renewal and Resilience in a Post-Pandemic World Call for Proposals, the submission deadline serves as a cut-off date. It may not be possible to consider applications received after the above date. The Intention to Submit Form along with information on the submission procedure are available at:

<https://www.transatlanticplatform.com/>.

In the first phase of the application procedure, the lead principal investigator must then submit a joint proposal for a collaborative project in English

no later than midnight (UTC/GMT -3) on 12 July 2021

in electronic form using the SAGe application system (hosted by the São Paulo Research Foundation – FAPESP). Project proposal templates and the application system can be accessed at:

<https://www.transatlanticplatform.com/>.

In accordance with the T-AP Recovery, Renewal and Resilience in a Post-Pandemic World Call for Proposals, the submission deadline serves as a cut-off date. It will not be possible to consider project proposals received after the above date.

The information needed for project proposals can be taken from the T-AP Recovery, Renewal and Resilience in a Post-Pandemic World Call for Proposals (e.g. the Guidelines on how to submit a proposal, the Application Template and the Summary Budget Table; these can all be accessed via the T-AP website: <https://www.transatlanticplatform.com/>).

In conjunction with the T-AP Call Secretariat, the national funding organizations participating in the T-AP Recovery, Renewal and Resilience in a Post-Pandemic World Call for Proposals will check the submitted project proposals for compliance with the formal requirements (eligibility check, e.g. compliance with national regulations, inclusion of all necessary information in English). Project proposals that do not meet these requirements will be rejected. Details concerning the eligibility check can be found in the T-AP Recovery, Renewal and Resilience in a Post-Pandemic World Call for Proposals guidelines on the website (<https://www.transatlanticplatform.com/>) as well as in the corresponding national rules and regulations (for German applicants, see 3. above).

Project proposals that meet the formal criteria will first be forwarded to at least two external reviewers and then to an international external review panel, and in each instance will be evaluated according to the criteria set out in the T-AP Recovery, Renewal and Resilience in a Post-Pandemic World Call for Proposals (intellectual merit, quality, innovation and feasibility of the research plan, broader impacts, relevance to the call, partnership and planning).

Project ideas suitable for funding will be selected in accordance with the criteria set out in the T-AP Recovery, Renewal and Resilience in a Post-Pandemic World Call for Proposals and the evaluation procedure described therein. Applicants will be informed in writing of the result of this procedure: In a first step, the lead principal investigator who submitted the proposal for the collaborative project will be informed once the evaluation has been completed. Subsequently, the other national partners involved in the collaborative project selected by the review panel will be informed by the national funding organizations and the respective national application procedures will then be carried out.

For project partners from Germany whose proposal received a positive evaluation, a second procedural phase begins (see 7.2.2).

The project proposals and any other documents submitted in this phase of the procedure will not be returned.

#### 7.2.2 Submission of formal funding applications and decision-making procedure

In the second phase of the procedure, the German project partners of those research collaborations whose proposals received a positive evaluation are invited to submit a formal funding application for their project (i.e. the German sub-project within the collaborative project).

The “easy-Online” electronic application system must be used for drafting formal applications. The funding applications must be submitted to the DLR Project Management Agency in both printed and electronic form:

[https://foerderportal.bund.de/easyonline/reflink.jsf?m=GSW&b=T-AP\\_RRR\\_CALL](https://foerderportal.bund.de/easyonline/reflink.jsf?m=GSW&b=T-AP_RRR_CALL))

The formal funding application must be accompanied by a project description in German, giving a brief outline of the overall project and a more detailed description of the German sub-project, and should be no more than twelve pages in length.

The formal applications must observe and fulfil any topic-specific or funding-related requirements and/or evaluators’ recommendations for the implementation of the project. The formal application must include the following information which is supplementary to the project proposal:

- A detailed financing plan
- A detailed description of the utilization of results
- Reason for funding requirement
- A detailed work plan including planning of project-related resources and milestones

The applications received will be reviewed and evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Eligibility for funding
- Need for and appropriateness of requested funding
- Plausibility of the details of the financial plan
- Quality and information content of the utilization plan, also in terms of the objectives of this funding measure
- Fulfilment of any requirements resulting from the first phase of the procedure and compliance with the financial framework recommended for funding in this phase

A funding decision will be taken after final consideration on the basis of the above criteria and evaluation.

### 7.3 Relevant regulations

The approval and payment of and accounting for the funds as well as the proof and examination of the proper use and, if necessary, the revocation of the award and the reclaiming of the funds awarded are governed by sections 48 to 49a of the Administrative Procedure Act (VwVfG), sections 23 and 44 of the Federal Budget Code (BHO) and the related general administrative regulations, unless the present funding regulations allow for deviation from the general administrative regulations. The *Bundesrechnungshof* is entitled to carry out audits in accordance with section 91 of the Federal Budget Code (BHO).

## 8 Validity

These funding regulations will enter into force on the day of their publication in the Federal Gazette (*Bundesanzeiger*) and remain valid until 31 March 2026.

Bonn, 18 March 2021

Federal Ministry  
of Education and Research

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