

## Programme Information

### **Overcoming global challenges with new technologies – Humboldt Research Hubs in Africa and the Middle East**

Overcoming global challenges is the central task of the 21st century. If we are to see a liveable future, we must develop and implement workable solutions to urgent worldwide problems. The north-south divide is increasingly changing: the countries of the Global South (including developing and transition countries in Africa and the Middle East) remain especially vulnerable, but at the same time the countries of the Global North are facing massive new issues in many key areas. It is therefore more important than ever that we develop north-south collaborations as learning communities for overcoming these shared challenges. Analysing global challenges from the viewpoints of different world regions opens up new ways to uncover and utilise potential synergies that often cannot be found in conventional, regionally focused approaches; this makes it possible to avoid time- and resource-consuming detours and paves the way for major advancements on our path to overcoming global challenges. Key and cutting edge technologies moreover provide further opportunities for meeting complex challenges.

#### Programme

From 2026, **up to five Humboldt Research Hubs** will be sponsored with funding from the Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space (Bundesministerium für Forschung, Technologie und Raumfahrt, BMFTR). **These hubs are to be set up by alumni of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (AvH) in the following target countries: Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Jordan, Kenya, South Africa or Turkey.** Each Research Hub will receive up to €800,000 in funding over a period of five years.

**Alumni eligible to apply are established researchers (at least associate professorship or equivalent position) working at universities and research institutions in the target countries.** As heads of their Humboldt Research Hub, they will implement research concepts developed from their personal perspectives, choosing collaborative partners for themselves at universities and research institutions in Germany. Additional collaborative partners (at least W2/associate professorship or equivalent) may be involved if they are working at a university or research institution in a country in Africa or the Middle East that is eligible for ODA, i.e. a country that can receive public development funding (Official Development Assistance, ODA) as per the regulations of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), with the exception of countries in armed conflict situations and countries subject to sanctions limiting international monetary transactions. AvH alumni in South Africa must integrate a collaborative partner in another African country.

The aim of the Humboldt Research Hubs is to develop **innovative solutions to global challenges by using AI and other cutting edge and key technologies such as digital networking, robotics, findings from space research etc. in ways that serve the common**

**good.** Challenges considered “global” are those that are faced both by the countries of the Global South (and especially the respective target countries) and those of the Global North (and especially Germany), albeit at differing intensities and in differing manifestations – e.g. in fields as significant as **future energies, climate change adaptation, digital security, health, water supply, economics, natural resources, crisis preparedness, mobility etc.** All collaborative partners are expected to each contribute and pursue their own research questions that increase the global relevance of the concept; the Foundation moreover welcomes the involvement of private-sector stakeholders (e.g. startups) in the countries where the research hubs are located. The Humboldt Foundation is especially keen to see junior researchers included in these research cooperations, and also encourages the involvement of postdoctoral researchers in leadership responsibilities at the Humboldt Research Hubs.

### **Sponsorship measures, sponsorship amount and sponsorship period**

**Funding for each Humboldt Research Hub is provided for a fixed term of five years and up to a total funding amount of €800,000.** Funding for the fourth and fifth year will be granted following a positive interim assessment that takes place in the third year of sponsorship. The head of the Humboldt Research Hub must use the funding amount to carry out the research concept at the Humboldt Research Hub in the respective target country in cooperation with the institutes of the collaborative partners in Germany and, if applicable, further countries in Africa or the Middle East eligible for ODA. The funding amount may be used to cover all expenses that serve this purpose. These expenses include:

- Employing junior researchers at the Humboldt Research Hub and at cooperating institutions in Africa and the Middle East, mobility for the working group, organising events, attending conferences, etc.;
- Research stays in Germany for the head of the Research Hub;
- Scientific equipment (only for the Humboldt Research Hub and cooperating institutions in Africa and the Middle East), consumables, academic literature, sundries (up to €60,000 per year);
- Salary supplements for the head of the Humboldt Research Hub and collaborative partners in leading academic positions at institutions in Africa and the Middle East (up to €30,000 per year);
- Management costs (up to €20,000 per year) to cover all the costs of setting up and developing the respective research hub and to compensate for any expenses arising from the use of existing or specifically procured equipment or personnel.

Further information on how the funding amount may be used can be found in the [Regulations on the Use of Funds](#).

### **Funding recipient:**

The funding recipient will be the head of the Humboldt Research Hub. The Alexander von Humboldt Foundation expects the home institution of the head of the Humboldt Research Hub to take on the fiduciary responsibility for administering the funding amount in the name of and on behalf of the head of the Humboldt Research Hub.

## Application requirements

- The application is made by an alumna or alumnus of the AvH sponsorship programmes working as an established researcher (at least W2/associate professorship or equivalent position) at a university or research institute in one of the target countries.
- The applicant has not previously received funding through the Humboldt Research Hubs programme.
- A collaborative partner at a university or research institution in Germany is involved.
- It is possible to include an established researcher (at least W2/associate professorship or equivalent position) at a further research institute/a further university in a country in Africa or the Middle East that is eligible for ODA (except countries in armed conflict situations and countries subject to sanctions limiting international monetary transactions).
- AvH alumni in South Africa must integrate a collaborative partner in another African country (except countries in armed conflict situations and countries subject to sanctions limiting international monetary transactions).

## Two-stage application process

Stage 1: Submit an application outline by **15 June 2026** to h-rh[at]avh.de, consisting of:

- An **application outline of the planned research concept** ([template](#));
- **CVs** and **publication lists** for the applicant and all collaborative partners;
- **Statements** from the directors of the institutions involved.

**Important information on making an application can be found in the [FAQ](#).**

After all formally eligible application outlines submitted within the deadline have been reviewed, we will determine which alumni are invited to submit a full application.

Stage 2: Submit a full application (*by invitation only*) with the following documents:

- Completed **application form** (*template will be provided*);
- **Funding plan**, broken down by years, indicating the intended use of funds, including explanations (*template will be provided*);
- **Detailed research concept for the planned Humboldt Research Hub**;
- A **(junior) researcher declaration form** for each (junior) researcher who will be involved either at the Humboldt Research Hub itself or working with the collaborative partners (where already known) (*template will be provided*).

Complete, formally eligible full applications submitted by the deadline will be independently reviewed and then presented to a selection committee consisting of leading specialist researchers. A decision on the full applications will be made within four to six months.

Please refer to the programme information when completing your application. Answers to frequently asked questions (including information on how to draft the application outline and the full application) can be found on the AvH website.

The [Regulations on the Use of Funds](#) and [Rules of Good Scientific Practice](#) also apply for the application and sponsorship process.

**Criteria for approval are:**

- The academic qualifications of the applicant and their collaborative partners, as well as their experience of successful international cooperation;
- The academic quality, originality and relevance of the research concept for developing practicable solutions to global challenges in all countries involved in the research cooperation;
- Details of how the Research Hub will work with its collaborative partners in Germany as an equitable, sustainable South-North learning community on the innovative use of cutting-edge and key technologies;
- The appropriateness of the requested funding volume, as well as the suitability of the requested sponsorship measures for realising the research concept;
- The applicant's proven academic qualifications as a leader and mentor;
- The plans presented in the application for integrating qualified junior researchers and the suitability of the research concept for building academic capacities in the target countries and, where applicable, other countries in Africa and the Middle East in the long term.

This programme is financed by the:



Federal Ministry  
of Research, Technology  
and Space