

Handout to boost recruitment of female Alexander von Humboldt Professors



The Alexander von Humboldt Foundation aims to attract more female researchers to Germany with an Alexander von Humboldt Professorship. Up to now, the proportion of top women researchers nominated for Germany's most valuable research award was 25 percent. Conversations with nominators have shown that it is often the same reasons that hamper the recruitment of women researchers although the Humboldt Professorship Programme was designed to provide viable opportunities for solving mobility issues in good time. This handout should highlight the programme's existing flexibility.

1. Support for families

The host institution in Germany receives a lump sum of 15 percent of the award amount (administrative lump sum). Part of this sum may be used, for example, to finance Welcome Packages of measures to integrate the award winner in the new social environment and the research institution. This includes support for the professional integration of partners, family reunification and childcare.

2. The Foundation's gender measures

Mentoring offer: Potential female Alexander von Humboldt professors, who are being or have been nominated or have been recently selected, can benefit from sharing experiences with established female Alexander von Humboldt professors. As part of the mentoring, mentees are given advice on topics such as conducting appointment negotiations, relocating to Germany with the family and other issues related to their future integration into their new professional environment. The foundation facilitates this contact. Should any uncertainties emerge relating to appointment negotiations in a foreign culture, attention is drawn to the support offered by the German Association of University Professors and Lecturers which provides individual coaching, financed by the Humboldt Foundation. **Flexibility:** If an award winner cites family reasons (e.g., family reunification) for delaying the start of the professorship, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation may agree to extend the deadline for assuming the professorship from 12 to 18 months after selection.

Flexibility: The Foundation encourages host institutions to offer award winners flexible working arrangements, as needed and within the framework of legal regulations, to make the relocation (e.g., within an appropriate period of two years) as smooth as possible. This facilitates the move to Germany (relocation of the research group, family reunification, etc.).

Incentive for the recruiter: The recruiter who coordinates the nomination application may have to spend time and energy convincing female researchers who are difficult to mobilise. In order to relieve this person of other responsibilities, the administrative allowance may also be used to fund a research position at the host institution that benefits the recruiter.

3. Variable salary components

The Humboldt Professorship allows up to €180,000 annually (up to €250,000 in particularly well-founded cases) to be withdrawn from the award amount in addition to the salary paid by the university. To recruit female researchers, and in so far as it applies to the specific case, the existing framework for personal income should also be utilised flexibly.

4. Experienced Alexander von Humboldt Professors tell their success stories (selection)

Portraits of leading-edge researchers: In *Kosmos* magazine on our website, we introduce Alexander von Humboldt Professors and their research. Nominated women researchers can be referred to them, and the individual profiles also include video portraits and information about their career paths.

The [behavioural biologist Meg Crofoot](#) is the director of the Department for the Ecology of Animal Societies at the Max Planck Institute of Animal Behaviour and an Alexander von Humboldt Professor at the University of Konstanz. In [Humboldt Kosmos](#) she deciphers the complex social behaviour in animal societies, and in the [multimedia report “The Might of the Majority”](#), she takes a critical look at being a female role model. She also provides an answer to the question as to what needs to happen so that more women are nominated for Alexander von Humboldt Professorships.

The [bioengineer Sahika Inal](#) is a world leader in organic bioelectronics and conducts research at TU Dresden and the Leibniz Institute of Polymer Research. In a [video portrait](#) she talks about her research, “We are building materials and devices that can communicate with living systems, especially the human body.” Together with her research group, the bioengineer develops materials that act as a bridge between the worlds of biology and electronics.

Relocating from Canada, the [developmental psychologist Tina Malti](#) became an Alexander von Humboldt Professor at Leipzig University where she heads the [Humboldt Science Centre for Child Development](#) (HumanKind). She explores how children can regain strength after traumatic experiences, how specifically resilience can be fostered and how we can empower children – through small, targeted steps in everyday life. Find out more in [Kosmos](#).

AI is a black box – but the [legal expert Sandra Wachter](#) throws light on darkness. The Humboldt Professor works at the Hasso Plattner Institute on the data ethics, regulation and social impact of generative AI – that is, AI systems that generate new content such as texts, images, audio and videos. She maintains that the term “artificial intelligence” is misleading and that more regulation is needed to strike a balance between opportunities and risks.

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