



**Alexander von Humboldt**  
Stiftung / Foundation

**The Philipp Schwartz Initiative of the  
Alexander von Humboldt Foundation:**

**Special Programme  
“Bridge Fellowships for Scholars from Afghanistan”**

**Programme Guidelines**

(as of January 2022)

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## 0. Programme background and objective

The Philipp Schwartz Initiative of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation is a sponsorship programme for supporting researchers and scholars who are subject to significant and continuous personal threat in their country of origin. The initiative continues to accept nominations of Afghan researchers with good prospects for their provisional integration into the German science system or academic system.

To supplement this, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation has established a special programme titled “Bridge Fellowships for Scholars from Afghanistan” with the support of Germany’s Federal Foreign Office. This special programme targets another group of Afghan researchers and scholars who are at acute risk, for whom, due to their specific qualifications, the main programme of the Philipp Schwartz Initiative is not the ideal option, and who will give special consideration to prospects outside science and academia. The special programme was developed with the aim of offering these individuals a bridge to safety with the support of a host institution and the Humboldt Foundation.

Using approximately 20 fellowships, the new programme puts German universities and research institutions in a position to host for a period of up to 12 months an Afghan researcher or scholar who is at acute risk, secure their livelihood at the host institution through a fellowship, and actively support them in connection with qualification measures and steps to prepare the ground for their long-term prospects. Depending on the recipient’s qualifications, special consideration is to be given to career prospects outside the science field or academia as well. The fellowship will be supplemented by a lump-sum allowance for qualification measures which the host institution can use plus separate guidance services offered by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation.

In light of the increased threats that women in Afghanistan face, special attention will be given to supporting female researchers.

## 1. Terms and conditions for grants

As part of the Philipp Schwartz Initiative’s special programme “Bridge Fellowships for Scholars from Afghanistan”, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation offers universities and research institutions in Germany the financial means under the „Allgemeine Nebenbestimmungen für Zuwendungen zur Projektförderung“ (General Ancillary Conditions for project funding grants; ANBest-P) to temporarily host and sponsor threatened researchers and scholars – including university lecturers – from Afghanistan.

The regulations governing grants provided through this programme comprise (in the respective latest version):

- the Programme Guidelines and Programme Information;
- the *Allgemeine Nebenbestimmungen des Auswärtigen Amts für die Projektförderung* (ANBest-P; Appendix 1) [General Ancillary Conditions for project funding grants] – In German only;
- the *Besondere Nebenbestimmungen des Auswärtigen Amts für die Gewährung von Zuwendungen* (BNBest AA; Appendix 2) [General Ancillary Conditions of the Federal Foreign Office for awarding grants] – In German only;
- the *Stipendienrichtlinien des Auswärtigen Amts* (Appendix 3) [Fellowship Guidelines of the Federal Foreign Office].

The German versions of the above programme documents are binding. The English translations are convenience translations that are provided for information purposes only. The approval and disbursement of funding is subject to the availability of budgetary funds. Double funding is not permitted.

## **2. Application by the host institution**

### **2.1. Eligibility**

Only one application may be submitted per institution. A single application may contain nominations for up to five individuals.

Any university or other research institution in Germany that falls into one of the following categories is eligible to submit an application:

- state or state-recognised higher education institutions (see HRK Higher Education Compass)
- research institutions belonging to one of the members of the Alliance of Science Organisations in Germany (Max Planck Society, Helmholtz Association, Leibniz Association, Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft)
- research institutions belonging to the federal government or a state (*Land*) government
- other research institutions that can conclusively demonstrate their research focus and structures (see Appendix 4a)

### **2.2 Nomination requirements**

Researchers and scholars who are Afghan nationals may be nominated when they:

- have a research profile and were most recently employed as a lecturer and/or researcher at an Afghan university or research institution or as local staff at a German research institution;
- have, as a minimum, a post-graduate degree (master's degree or doctorate) and are not officially enrolled at a university in Germany. Students, doctoral candidates, and lecturers with a bachelor's degree interested in pursuing graduate degrees are to be referred to the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD);
- left Afghanistan on or after 1 June 2021 and now reside in Germany or a third country, or still reside in Afghanistan (persons who have resided outside of Afghanistan for longer than this should be nominated for a fellowship through the core programme of the Philipp Schwartz Initiative when they fulfil the requirements);
- who would be in substantial danger if they were to remain in Afghanistan.

In general, individuals who have access to a safe country due to holding dual citizenship or other circumstances, such as marriage to an EU citizen, and German nationals are not eligible to be nominated. The same individual may not be nominated by more than one potential host institution at the same time.

### **2.3 Submission of applications**

The deadline for submitting an application is 28 February 2022. The host institution is responsible for submitting a complete application with all the following documents (see Appendix 4a-d):

1. Cover form;
2. Application/Applications for funding for a fellowship, including an outline of a research project that involves training that is relevant to the nominee's occupation; in the event that more than one individual is nominated, a separate application form and appendices must be submitted for each individual;
3. Financing plan;
4. Preliminary calculation of the fellowship.

The institution making the application is responsible for checking certificates and other documents that provide substantiation regarding, for example, the nominee's nationality, residence status; and

(where applicable) doctorate. Only copies or digital scans should be included with the application. A translation must be attached for all documents that are not in German or English.

The application must be signed by the head of the submitting institution (such as the president, rector or – for non-university research institutions – director) and then sent electronically in a single PDF file by the project director to [brueckenfoerderungen@avh.de](mailto:brueckenfoerderungen@avh.de). Application forms may be electronically signed and transmitted. Application forms that have been personally signed may be scanned and then transmitted electronically. In view of how easily electronic communication can be compromised, institutions are requested to protect applications with passwords. Passwords should be transmitted to the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation by telephone or fax, and but not via the same channel as the application itself.

## **2.4 Proof of threat**

Each nomination for a Bridge Fellowship must include a statement by the nominee explaining the threat to them. If this statement is not in English or German, an English or German translation must also be included. The statement should not exceed one page in length. Supplementary documents such as statements or notifications from German authorities or other credible sources are desirable, but not required.

## **3. Selection procedure and criteria**

The decision on the approval of nominations to be funded will be made by the relevant selection committee of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation based on the application documents and the availability of budgetary funds.

The following criteria will be applied:

- the research profile of the nominated individual;
- the commitment of the host institution and proposed academic mentor on behalf of the nominated person
  - with respect to concrete support and training measures;
  - with respect to the nominee's prospects for the time after the sponsorship ends;
- research project well-suited to the host institution that also serves advanced training of relevance to the nominee's occupation.

## **4. Funding of threatened researchers through the host institution**

The host institution will function as the fellowship-granting agency for its fellows. It will also assume the administrative work in accordance with these Programme Guidelines and the procedures and regulations in place where the fellowship is conducted. This also applies to all documents (e.g. fellowship confirmation letter, acceptance form, fellowship agreement) and the handling of administrative, logistic and legal matters (e.g. residence permit, health insurance, accommodation).

### **4.1 Grant agreement**

The grant will be provided through fixed-sum financing in accordance with the *Allgemeine Nebenbestimmungen für Zuwendungen zur Projektförderung* (ANBest-P) [General Ancillary Conditions for project funding grants] in the latest version. When an application has been approved, a grant letter will be issued, together with an acceptance form which must be signed by the head of the host institution or an authorised representative and returned to the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. The signed acceptance form is the grant agreement.

### **4.2 Accounting**

Funding must be posted to a separate project account and administered separately in order to ensure transparency in the use of these funds in the event of an audit by the Humboldt Foundation, a certified public accountant on behalf of the Humboldt Foundation, or by Germany's supreme audit institution, the *Bundesrechnungshof*.

### **4.3 Elements of the grant**

Within the framework of the grant, the host institution will be provided funding for a fellowship (see 4.3.1) and a lump-sum allowance for qualification measures (see 4.3.2) for each fellow it sponsors.

#### **4.3.1 Fellowship**

Fellowship funds to cover living costs in Germany will be approved for the duration of the fellowship which can last up to 12 months. When a sponsored individual accepts their research fellowship, the host institute must oblige them to fully dedicate themselves to the objective of the fellowship and to their (new) career focus. It is not possible to pursue any other full-time employment in Germany or abroad during the sponsorship period. Since individuals who have been chosen for a fellowship through this special programme are not employees, conducting their research projects is not considered gainful employment as defined by the German Income Tax Act (*Einkommensteuergesetz*). The monthly fellowship disbursements are therefore not earned income and are not subject to German social security contributions. Laws in the fellow's country of origin may contain special provisions regarding the taxation of research fellowships. In case of doubt, a tax advisor should be consulted.

The host institution is to oblige its fellows to inform it of any secondary employment they have. Secondary employment with earnings exceeding the upper limit for "marginal part-time employees" (the so-called *Verdienstgrenze für geringfügig Beschäftigte*, currently EUR 450 gross per month) requires the host institution's prior approval. Such earnings must be offset against the monthly amount of the individual's fellowship. The institution is responsible for determining whether the secondary employment jeopardises the objective of the fellowship. If this is the case, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation is to be notified immediately and the fellowship is to be suspended or terminated if necessary.

Individuals who are sponsored through this programme may not accept additional fellowships financed through German public funds.

#### **4.3.2 Presence at the host institution**

As a rule, the individual fellow is required to be present at the respective host institution. Although it is permissible to arrange an agreement on telework, it is not permissible to telework from outside of Germany. Fellows are not entitled to the monthly fellowship payment if they are absent from their host institution for more than 14 calendar days (consecutively or altogether) during the sponsorship period. In such cases, the host institution is required to reduce the fellowship payments and inform the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. Attendance at conferences, research trips, visits to archives and libraries and similar activities that are essential for conducting the proposed research project or for developing the individual's career prospects are not counted.

During the first month of a fellowship, recipients are entitled to a disbursement only when they enter the host country by the 15th of that month (or the next working day). During the last month of a fellowship, recipients are entitled to a disbursement only when they are present in Germany until at least the 15th of the month.

### **4.3.3 Fellowship benefits**

The fellowship benefits outlined below detail the options laid down in the Fellowship Guidelines of the Federal Foreign Office.

A preliminary breakdown of the maximum anticipated fellowship benefits is to be submitted with the application for a Bridge Fellowship (see Appendix 4c). A binding calculation is to be submitted before the sponsorship begins. Once the sponsorship begins, deviations are to be coordinated in writing with the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, based on the submission of updated versions of the fellowship calculation and financing plan. Approval is subject to the availability of budgetary funds.

#### **4.3.3.1 Amount of the fellowship**

As a rule, the amount of the fellowship is EUR 2,670 per month. This includes a standard fellowship in the amount of EUR 2,500 which corresponds to the Post-Doctoral Candidate category laid down in the Fellowship Guidelines of the Federal Foreign Office, plus a mobility allowance of EUR 100 and, usually, a subsidy of EUR 70 towards the cost of medical and liability insurance.

#### **4.3.3.2 Ancillary benefits under the fellowship**

In addition to the monthly fellowship payments, the host institution can, in consultation with the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, grant the individual fellow certain needs-based benefits when the respective conditions are met. The project manager at the host institution is responsible for advising the recipient regarding the available ancillary benefits, and for checking and retaining corresponding documents (such as proof of marriage or birth). The Alexander von Humboldt Foundation grants funding to cover ancillary benefits, subject to the availability of budgetary funds.

The available ancillary benefits (other than the mobility allowance in the amount of EUR 100 and the subsidy of EUR 70 towards the cost of medical and liability insurance) are:

- family benefits for marital partners
- family benefits for children
- subsidies for medical and liability insurance for family members

##### **4.3.3.2.1 Mobility allowance**

As part of their monthly fellowship, fellows automatically receive a mobility allowance in the amount of EUR 100 a month for the duration of their fellowship. The mobility allowance is a grant to cover expenses arising in connection with necessary conference attendance, research travel, visits to archives and libraries, and similar activities in Germany and abroad. Although additional allowances for travel or conferences cannot be provided through the fellowship funding, they can however be made available through the lump-sum allowance for qualification measures provided to the host institution. Fellows are required to always coordinate any travel plans with their academic mentor.

##### **4.3.3.2.2 Family benefits for marital partners**

In addition to the monthly fellowship payments, the host institution can grant additional benefits for marital partners and children who accompany the fellow, when the respective conditions are met. The project manager at the host institution is responsible for verifying that the requirements are met: When the marital partner and/or children does/do not require a visa for Germany, the project manager at the host institution is responsible for checking the individual's entitlement (based on the fellow's marriage certificate and/or their child's (children's) birth certificate(s)). A copy of the respective document must be retained for at least six years. These documents are to be presented only upon request to the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation or the audit firm it has commissioned.

Upon application, a family allowance in the amount of EUR 276 a month may be granted during the sponsorship period when the fellow's marital partner accompanies the fellow to Germany for at least three months without interruption. Any income of the fellow's marital partner (salary or earnings from self-employment or dependent employment in Germany, German or foreign fellowships) which exceeds the upper limit for "marginal part-time employees" (the so-called *Verdienstgrenze für geringfügig Beschäftigte*, currently EUR 450 gross per month) is to be offset against the family allowance paid for the marital partner.

A fellow who has children who reside with them in Germany for more than six months without interruption may apply for payment of a parental allowance under German law – Federal Parental Allowances and Parental Leave Act (*Bundeselterngeld- und Elternzeitgesetz*) – for the first 14 months of the respective child's life. Payment of a family allowance for the marital partner is not to be approved in any of these cases. Should the application for payment of a parental allowance be turned down, the host institution is responsible for retaining copies of the official notification of rejection. As a rule, the family allowance may be granted for the marital partners only when it has been confirmed that a parental allowance under German law is not being or has not been paid during the period being applied for. The family allowance for the fellow's marital partner is discontinued when the marital partner leaves Germany.

#### **4.3.3.2.3 Family benefits for children**

Family benefits for children under the age of 18 can include a substitutional payment in the amount of the government child benefit, provided that legal entitlement to payment of child benefit does not exist. When children (section 2(1), No. 1 and 2 of the Federal Child Benefits Act – *Bundeskindergeldgesetz*) under the age of 18 accompany a Bridge Fellow to Germany for a period of at least three months without interruption, the host institution may grant a substitutional payment for child benefit in a corresponding amount during the sponsorship period. When the marital partner and/or children does/do not require a visa for Germany, the project director at the host institution is responsible for checking the individual's entitlement (for example, based on the child's (children's) birth certificate(s)). A copy of the respective document(s) must be retained for at least six years. These documents are to be presented only upon request to the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation or the audit firm it has commissioned.

Bridge Fellows whose children reside in Germany for more than six months without interruption may apply for child benefit (*Kindergeld*) under German law (Income Tax Act – *Einkommensteuergesetz* or the Federal Child Benefits Act – *Bundeskindergeldgesetz*). In those cases where child benefit is paid, the host institution cannot grant a substitutional payment for child benefit. Should the application for child benefit be turned down, the host institution is responsible for retaining copies of the official notification of rejection and the applicant's residence permit. As a rule, the substitutional payment for child benefit may be granted only when it can be confirmed that child benefit paid under German law will not be or has not been paid during the period being applied for. The substitutional payment for child benefit is discontinued when the child (children) leave(s) Germany.

#### **4.3.3.2.4 Subsidy towards the cost of medical and liability insurance**

The host institution can pay a subsidy of EUR 70 a month towards the cost of medical and liability insurance during the sponsorship period to Bridge Fellows as well as their marital partners and children under the age of 18 who accompany the respective fellow to Germany for a period of at least three months without interruption. All fellows must ensure they have medical insurance. The respective fellow is responsible for choosing the appropriate type of insurance coverage (foreign travel medical insurance or comprehensive medical insurance). The choice of insurance has no impact on the amount of the subsidy. This subsidy is paid automatically together with the monthly



fellowship payments to the respective fellow. The host institution must verify the entitlement of accompanying family members (length of residence in Germany, age of the children) and include it when calculating the ancillary fellowship benefits. When the marital partner and/or children does/do not require a visa for Germany, the project manager at the host institution is responsible for verifying the fellow's entitlement (based on their marriage certificate and/or the child's (children's) birth certificate(s)). A copy of the respective document(s) must be retained for at least six years. These documents are to be presented only upon request to the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation or the audit firm it has commissioned. Income of the fellow's marital partner (salary or earnings from self-employment or dependent employment in Germany, German or foreign fellowships) which exceeds the upper limit for "marginal part-time employees" (the so-called *Verdienstgrenze für geringfügig Beschäftigte*, currently EUR 450 gross per month) is to be offset against the subsidy paid for their medical and liability insurance. The subsidy for the marital partner and/or children is discontinued when they leave Germany.

#### **4.3.4 Lump-sum allowance for qualification measures**

The lump-sum allowance for qualification measures in the amount of EUR 5,000 is provided for realising suitable qualification and advanced training measures including German language courses and other measures that are suitable for preparing and opening up the respective fellow's occupational prospects for the time following the end of the sponsorship. This allowance is not to be used to cover general administrative expenses. The project manager decides in consultation with the individual being sponsored and the designated mentor on the use of the allowance; decisions are to be guided by the plans set forth in the application.

These funds are considered to be a lump-sum allowance and are to be used as such. The Alexander von Humboldt Foundation expects the host institution to use this lump-sum allowance with the aim of achieving the programme objectives, for the above-mentioned purposes, and in keeping with the applicable principles regarding the use of public funds. The activities financed with this lump-sum allowance must be disclosed in substantive reports submitted to the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. Only the inflow and outflow of funds are to be listed in the financial part of the report on the use of funds. Receipt lists and receipts for the individual expenditures paid for with the lump-sum allowance are not to be submitted to the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation or the audit firm commissioned by the Foundation. However, the *Bundesrechnungshof* (Germany's supreme audit institution) reserves the right to audit all use of public funds. It is therefore necessary to retain receipts and/or vouchers for at least six years after submission of the final report on the use of (total) funds in the event that they are requested during audits conducted by the funding provider or the *Bundesrechnungshof*.

#### **5. Request for funds, disbursement and repayment**

Once the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation is in receipt of the signed grant agreement, funds may be requested using the procedure and form designated for this purpose. When possible, arrangements are to be made to disburse the funds retroactively at the end of the respective quarter. If necessary, the disbursement of funds may be requested for the specific date on which they are scheduled to be spent. Holding funds beyond a period of six weeks after disbursement by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation is not permitted (please see 1.4 and 8.5, ANBest-P).

The funds may be used only during the authorised period. As a rule, the sponsorship period will extend from 1 May 2022 until 30 April 2023. Upon application, the starting date can be postponed by a maximum of six months, e.g. when the sponsored individual is unable to leave Afghanistan on a timely basis for reasons beyond their control. As a general rule, postponements for other reasons will be not accepted.

Funds that have been received but are no longer required must be transferred back without undue delay to the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation's account specified in the grant agreement (regardless of the deadline set for the submission of the report on the use of funds). The financing plan must be amended accordingly.

## **6. Report on the use of funds / Documentation**

Reports on the use of funds are to be prepared in accordance with the *Allgemeine Nebenbestimmungen für Zuwendungen zur Projektförderung* (ANBest-P) in its current version. The form supplied by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation are to be used for this:

- report;
- numerical report including appropriate lists of receipts;
- itemised list for each fellowship recipient.

The required documents containing all necessary signatures must be submitted by the deadline. All relevant documentation related to a sponsorship must be retained by the funded institution for a period of six years after the end of the year in which the report on the use of funds is submitted for audit purposes.

## **7. Safety of sponsored individuals**

Individuals who are sponsored through the special programme "Bridge Fellowships for Scholars from Afghanistan" of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation can be subject to increased risk during their stay in Germany as well. Sometimes, simply identifying a person as being a fellow of this programme can have disastrous consequences, e.g. for relatives who have remained in the fellow's country of origin. In light of this, all communication and public relations activities are to be guided by the principle of ensuring the safety of the respective individual. Electronic communication regarding sponsored persons should either use the individual's initials or be encrypted. Passwords used for the encryption of files are to be sent using a separate channel such as by telephone. Any announcements regarding a fellowship and any reference to a sponsored individual require the express consent of the fellow.

## **8. Public relations activities**

The host institution must additionally observe the following in its communications and public relations activities:

- In dealings with fellowship recipients: The funding shall constitute "Bridge Fellowships provided by the host institution X with funding from the Federal Foreign Office". A Bridge Fellowship is not a Humboldt Research Fellowship or a Philipp Schwartz Fellowship. There are no provisions for recipients to join the Humboldt Network. The use of the Humboldt Foundation logo or the logo of the Federal Foreign Office in correspondence with fellowship recipients is not provided for either.
- Any public announcement of the fellowship is subject to the express consent of the person or persons sponsored.

## **9. Termination of the fellowship and the obligation to return funds**

Recipients of a Bridge Fellowship are to be obliged in writing by their host institutions to inform the respective institution immediately in writing of any changes in the circumstances of relevance to the award or the amount of the fellowship. If important grounds arise, the agreement/contract with the fellow is to be terminated, the host institution is to discontinue disbursement of funding and benefits and recover any payments or benefits that have been wrongfully received and return them to the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. The fellowship confirmation letter must contain a proviso to

this effect. Please contact the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation immediately in the event that the sponsorship is interrupted, discontinued or not commenced or in the event that other circumstances of relevance to the grant have changed.

## **10. Final provisions**

The Programme Guidelines and Programme Information specify the conditions for sponsorship through the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation's special programme "Bridge Fellowships for Scholars from Afghanistan". These documents are part of the grant. In the event of infringements of the Programme Guidelines or Programme Information, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation reserves the right to revoke in part or in full the decision to grant funding and to demand repayment of the fellowship in part or in full. This also applies when, during the sponsorship period or prior to that time, the funded institution makes or made false claims in connection with its application; when it does not verify the accuracy of relevant information provided by persons who are sponsored through the special programme "Bridge Fellowships for Scholars from Afghanistan" and does not notify the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation of any irregularities; or when other serious facts emerge which would have militated against the granting of the fellowship had they been known to the selection committee at the time. The Alexander von Humboldt Foundation reserves the right to amend the Programme Guidelines and Programme Information at any time, provided that the amendments are reasonable vis-à-vis the funded institution, while also taking due account of the interests of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. The funded institution will be notified of any amendments in writing well in advance. Amendments are considered to have been approved if the funded institution has not objected in writing within four weeks. In the event of an objection, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation reserves the right to cease sponsorship within a reasonable period of time. The exclusive legal venue is Bonn, Germany. German law applies exclusively without choice-of-law rules.