



Programme Information

Sofja Kovalevskaja Award

The Alexander von Humboldt Foundation's Sofja Kovalevskaja Award, which is funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, is granted to young exceptionally promising researchers from abroad in recognition of outstanding academic achievements. The award is designed to enable them to embark on academic careers in Germany by establishing their own junior research groups at research institutions in Germany.

Scientists and scholars from abroad whose previous research has already been internationally recognised as outstanding and who are expected to continue producing outstanding results as recipients of the Sofja Kovalevskaja Award are eligible to submit applications.

The programme is open to scientists and scholars from all countries and disciplines who **completed their doctorates with distinction less than six years ago**. The Alexander von Humboldt Foundation particularly welcomes applications from qualified, **female** junior researchers.

Virtually unaffected by administrative constraints, the award winners will be able to concentrate on high-level, innovative research work of their own choice in Germany and thus strengthen the internationalisation of research in Germany. The award amount will allow the winners to finance their own junior research group at the university or non-university research institution of their choosing in Germany and also cover their living expenses.

Award winners will be selected solely on the basis of their academic qualifications. There are no quotas for individual disciplines or countries. The most important assessment criteria are:

- academic publications in internationally reviewed journals and / or publishing houses
- statements on the candidate's academic profile and potential in the form of expert reviews, requested by the candidate, from different institutions and, where possible, from different countries
- the academic quality and feasibility of the research project proposed by the candidate

Applications are assessed by independent peer reviewers appointed by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. An independent Alexander von Humboldt Foundation selection committee, composed of academics from all disciplines, selects up to six award winners and determines the award amount. The award is conferred by the President of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation under the patronage of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

Value and purpose of award and use of funds

As soon as the award has been conferred, the award winner is entitled to the award funds of up to 1.65 million EUR. The award funds are placed at the award winner's disposal for a period of five years to carry out the approved research project of his or her own choice in Germany. The award winners and their host institutions agree jointly on the commencement of the planned research work in Germany in the course of 2020.

The award winner must use the award funds to carry out his or her approved research project at the host institution in Germany. The award funds may be used to cover all expenses serving this purpose (including the necessary equipment and material, personnel, travel expenses, etc.). The award funds must be used economically and prudently. Scientific equipment financed by the award will become the property of the host institution immediately upon purchase. Part of the award may be used to cover the award winner's living expenses¹.

The host institution in Germany receives a flat-rate payment of 15% from the award funds (administrative flat-rate). It can be used to help cover any costs resulting from the use of existing and/or specifically acquired material or specifically created personnel infrastructure (e.g. general institute facilities, laboratories or workrooms, operating and maintenance costs, finance and personnel management and auditing); financing an eventual tenure track position is possible, too. In addition, the administrative flat-rate may be used to finance e.g. "welcome packages" that provide measures to integrate the award winner into his or her new living environment and into the research institution, including support for the professional integration of the award winner's partner, or compensation for the loss of retirement savings that were accrued abroad, etc. The host institution is permitted to pass any left-over funding from the administrative flat-rate to the award winner for the furtherance of his or her research work.

Detailed information on the award winners' accounting obligations (proof of use of funds, etc.) can be found in the [Regulations on the use of funds](#) for the Sofja Kovalevskaja Award.

Application requirements

1. **Doctorate** or comparable academic degree (Ph.D., C.Sc. or equivalent), completed with distinction less than six years prior to the application submission deadline.
2. **Career level:** the award would enable the successful applicant to take on a leadership position (e.g. head of a junior research group) in Germany **for the first time**. Moreover, the applicant must not have held or accepted an offer of permanent employment in Germany. The relevant date is the date of the selection.
3. **Cutting-edge academic achievements** documented by a comprehensive list of independent **academic publications** reviewed according to international standards and printed in journals and / or by publishing houses.
4. **Support of the German host institution**, evidenced by a **detailed expert's report** from the academic host as well as the **host's agreement** and the **confirmation from the administration** at the host institution.
5. **Two supporting expert reviews** from academics (at the applicant's own institute or other institutes, where possible including some outside the applicant's country of origin).
6. **Language skills:** scholars in the humanities or social sciences and physicians must have a good knowledge of German if it is necessary to carry out the project successfully; otherwise a good knowledge of English; scientists and engineers must have a good knowledge of German or English.
7. **No previous Sofja Kovalevskaja Award.**

Eligible applicants must have lived outside Germany for a minimum of 12 months in total in the 18-month period prior to the submission deadline.

Potential applicants of German nationality are eligible to apply provided that their habitual place of work and residence has been located abroad on the assumption of permanence for at least five years. Potential applicants who have completed their school education and one university degree or one university degree and their doctorate in Germany are subject to the regulations governing German citizens. Visit the FAQs on the website for additional information.

¹ The maximum amount of the personal income is – following the non-tariff regulation set by the Federal Ministry of the Interior in its circular letter of 18 November 2005 (Az D II 2 – 220 234); in consideration of the change of salaries according to the circular letter of 20 September 2018 – Az D5-31000/21#2 – as of 1 April 2019 7,652,43 EUR a month (employee's gross income). This corresponds to an employer's gross amount of ca. 114,000 EUR p.a. Regarding taxes please refer to our regulations on use of funds.

Application procedure

Applications can only be submitted online. Only the currently valid application documents may be used to apply. The completed application form, including the necessary additional documents, must reach the **Alexander von Humboldt Foundation** by **31 July 2019 at the latest**.

Additional information on [online applications](#), all the documentation required and access to the online application procedure are available on the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation's website until the submission deadline. Immediately after submitting the documents, the applicants will receive a confirmation.

The expert reviews and the host's confidential statement must be uploaded by their authors directly to the applicant's online 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.

When receiving the information about the selection decision, candidates may apply informally by email to be informed about the factors which led to a rejection, should their applications have been turned down by the selection committee. In this case, applicants and their hosts will receive notification on this issue in addition to the selection decision approx. four to six weeks after the selection committee meeting. It is not possible to appeal. Applicants who have been rejected may however submit a revised application in response to a future call for applications provided that fundamental aspects of the original application have been significantly improved and the then applicable submission requirements are met.

Visit the [FAQs](#) and the [Information for the host](#) on the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation's website for more information on the selection procedure.

General regulations and obligations

The award recognises the outstanding academic record to date as well as the personality of leading junior academics. It is thus taken for granted that, both in their previous academic work and during the research stay in Germany, award winners have abided by and will continue to abide by the Rules of Good Scientific Practice and the corresponding laws obtaining at the respective research location. Should an award be granted, further details can be found in section IX of the [Regulations on the Use of Funds](#).

When accepting the award, award winners undertake especially:

- to focus his or her entire working activity on the approved research project in Germany in agreement with the host institution and to be present regularly and permanently at the host institution in Germany according to customary practice in the respective discipline; secondary employment is only permissible in exceptional cases, providing it does not interfere with the sponsorship objectives, and requires prior written authorisation by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation
- not to utilise any other fellowships or funds from other German institutions designated for living expenses when using part of the award money to cover their living expenses;
- not to make use of any congruent sponsorship from funds deriving from German academic sponsorship; applications for or receipt of partial funding from German or foreign sources must be reported to the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation immediately.

The Alexander von Humboldt Foundation strongly recommends that host institutions should grant award winners the right to supervise doctoral students through to submission, if necessary in cooperation with a university. This should be negotiated with the host institution and, if necessary, in cooperation with a university on an individual contract basis. Any such contract should be submitted to the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation after the award has been accepted.