

In founding the Berlin University Alliance, Freie Universität Berlin (FU Berlin), Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (HU Berlin), Technische Universität Berlin (TU Berlin) and Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin have set the ambitious aim of jointly turning Berlin into an integrated research environment that is specially dedicated to addressing global grand challenges.

The Alliance is dedicating an initial stage of this initiative to the discussion of social cohesion. Both a descriptive and normative term, social cohesion has been at the center of vigorous debates on democracy, the future of technology and industry, diversity, heritage, migration, social and economic transformation, environmental and resource conflicts, digital spaces, resistance, resilience, health and much more. At the interface between academic perspectives – the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and engineering sciences – social cohesion is a highly topical research area that requires innovative perspectives as well as interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary access points. To comprehensively examine social cohesion requires integrated collaboration by a multitude of players from within and beyond research.

First “Grand Challenge Initiative” of the BERLIN UNIVERSITY ALLIANCE

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Preparation and Topic Development for “Exploration Projects” and “Research Units” on the topic of Social Cohesion

Aim

The call offers Berlin researchers the opportunity for self-organized, cross-institutional and topic-related collaboration in Berlin. It is a preparatory call for projects which address a topic relating to social cohesion over a period of six months. Applications can be submitted in all disciplines.

The funding initiative aims to strengthen cooperation and networks and to prepare potential applications for larger research projects within the future funding lines “Exploration Projects”/“Research Units” outlined in the Berlin University Alliance’s Excellence Strategy proposal; the call for applications will be issued in 2020.

Transdisciplinary working groups with applied and solution-oriented topics are particularly welcome. The participant group in the broader sense thus includes not only university researchers, but also stakeholders from politics, civil society, culture, administration and business. Expertise from outside of academia will also play a key role.

Eligibility for application

Projects must consist of a fixed group of at least five eligible applicants from at least two of the three Berlin universities or Charité. In accordance with DFG guidelines, all researchers of the member institutions of the Berlin University Alliance from post-doctoral level upwards are eligible to apply.

Applications may also involve additional non-university researchers and/or experts from outside of academia. Applicants may participate in one application only. Project members may include selected researchers from outside Berlin in order to integrate further outstanding national and international scholars into Berlin’s research landscape.

Funding

Successful projects will receive one-off funding of up to €10,000 for six months, beginning November 1, 2019 at the earliest. The funds can be used to cover material expenses, e.g. for project meetings in Berlin, travel and accommodation expenses for non-resident project members pursuant to the Travel Expense Act (*Reisekostenrecht*) of the State of Berlin, or topping up existing staff contracts. Applicants will not have to contribute any funds of their own.

Ideally, applicants will nominate a principal investigator from amongst its members to manage the funds. This person must belong to one of the three Berlin universities or Charité. The funds granted may be spent only by the Berlin University Alliance universities and Charité. No reporting is required.

Applicants are expected to participate in a transdisciplinary expert discussion (“trialogue”) to identify topics for the aforementioned main application phase.

Application process

Application forms are provided by the Berlin University Alliance under www.berlin-university-alliance.de/grand-challenge-initiatives. Applications must be submitted in German or English to grand-challenges@berlin-university-alliance.de by October 15, 2019. Applicants are obliged to inform their department, faculty or dean’s office (Charité) about their project proposal.

The application for funding must include the following:

1. Application form, including project description and objectives (up to 6,000 characters);
2. Budget form “Budget – Topic Development Social Cohesion”

Application statements should describe the extent to which transdisciplinary methods will be involved and whether and to what extent non-university expertise will be required in order to address the research questions.

The deadline for submission ends on **October 15, 2019**.

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