

I. OBJECTIVES

The programme offers top research alliances in Berlin the opportunity to establish cross-institutional research and teaching networks in Berlin by applying for an 'Einstein Center'. The aim is to generate new research priorities beyond the existing clusters and schools – in this sense, the funding of Einstein Centers can be seen as "seed money" to develop selected topics in preparation for other funding formats (e.g. Bundeswettbewerb, European funding formats in cooperation with international partners). Einstein Centers bundle and harness interdisciplinary scientific expertise in particularly innovative research fields, thus building internationally visible research focus areas in Berlin. They provide a platform for networking excellent research and the promotion of junior researchers in academic fields of significance for Berlin as a science location. Centers will address pivotal, innovative research questions and conduct excellent projects at the interface between disciplines. They will constitute a cross-institutional hub for cooperation, which may take various forms, from an interdisciplinary research group according to article 38, paragraph 5 BerlHG [Berlin University Act] to an independent legal entity, such as a limited non-profit corporation (gGmbH). Each Einstein Center will develop a concept to pursue its strategic goals, which will be agreed in consultation with its partner institutions, as well as elaborate a management plan to coordinate research, teaching and the transfer of knowledge between all participating partners. It will incorporate international expertise and develop internal selection and decision-making structures for the competitive allocation of funds. In addition, Centers will pledge to present aspects of their research to the general public in Berlin once a year.

II. ELIGIBILITY

Berlin's four universities as well as the Charité are eligible to apply. Of these, at least two must submit the proposal jointly; furthermore, additional non-university Berlin-based research institutions must be operationally involved.

An Einstein Circle (see separate programme overview) or a Preparation Module (see attachment) can be requested to help prepare an application for an Einstein Center.

III. FUNDING

It is assumed that the main objectives of the programme will be achieved on the basis of funding granted for a maximum period of six years. Support for excellent research to be conducted by alliances between Berlin-based universities is expected to

- secure the level of cooperation/research excellence already attained
- expand it by incorporating new topics, work orientation and partners (researchers and institutions)

- maintain a financial basis at the universities in order to raise additional funding (nationally and internationally) for the medium term
- prepare proprietary internal mechanisms in conjunction with the aforementioned elements that will consolidate this research within the research profiles of the participating institutions for the long term

Funding is available for concrete scientific projects as well as for establishing the institutional prerequisites for such projects, in particular:

- HR appropriations for scientific and, to a lesser extent, non-scientific staff
- material expenses, including travel and hosting expenses, as well as expenditure for open-access publications
- investments in equipment (construction excluded)

The grant can amount to a maximum of 2.5 million Euros per year. Einstein Centers may also be co-financed from private sources. Such a public-private partnership can increase the grant amount, in which case public funds will account for a maximum of one third of the overall grant sum.

IV. FUNDING PERIOD

Funding can be granted for a period of up to six years. The initial funding period is three years, an extension for a second three-year period must be requested at the beginning of the third year of funding.

V. APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications can be submitted to the Einstein Foundation for any research discipline at any time. The review will consist of a two-day visit by an international group of experts; please allow for a processing period of about eight months after submitting your application. If the project is to be co-financed, private sponsors are expected to provide a binding commitment for the initial phase of the grant at the time the application is submitted.

Applications must be submitted in English.

The application must clearly state the singular significance of the project for the institutions involved as well as for Berlin's science community, as seen by the leadership of the respective institutions. The application must also cite the volume of financial support the participating institutions will be able to contribute. Please make contact with the eligible institutions listed below well before submitting an application.

The application must contain the following:

- a description of the planned Center and its objectives
- a list of the initiators and the institutions they represent as well as their prospective role in the Center
- a short description of how existing networks and their achievements will be incorporated into the prospective Center

- a rationale of the excellent quality and originality of the prospective Center and its initiators by international comparison, including an academic CV and a list of up to 20 recent publications for each initiator as well as other appropriate performance indicators
- a short description of the initiators' major research outcomes in their field over the past decade
- a description of the research priorities planned within the center as well as the research programme, including details of objectives and methods
- a description of mechanisms to systematically promote junior researchers within the prospective Center
- an overview of planned interdisciplinary cooperation, examples of existing collaborations between the initiators and resulting outcomes, such as joint publications
- a concrete strategy on the modalities and intensity of cross-institutional cooperation and possible interactions with existing research priorities
- a detailed budget, including a description and justification, as well as a statement on co-financing by the participating institutions and third parties, if applicable; each budget must be broken down by financial year
- the name of the person to contact about processing the application

VI. USE OF FUNDS

Approved funding can only be claimed by one of the universities or the Charité in accordance with its third-party funding procedures. These institutions will act as employers of any staff financed by funds granted by the Einstein Foundation Berlin. If a partner is involved in the project, the grant recipient will forward the allotted funds to this partner *pro rata temporis*. Any staff paid from these funds will be employed by the partner institution.

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