

## Programme document Leibniz Research Alliances

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### 1. Aims of the funding instrument

- Leibniz Research Alliances promote supra-regional thematic priority setting within the Leibniz Association.
- The Leibniz Association pools the expertise of its institutes, strategically focuses its research and visibly stamps its mark on major topics in up to approx. ten Leibniz Research Alliances.

### 2. Characteristics of Leibniz Research Alliances

- Leibniz Research Alliances aim to achieve longer-term collaborations within the Leibniz Association in the framework of a clearly formulated research programme characterised by a high level of commitment between the partners and a visible public representation.

- Leibniz Research Alliances address sets of tasks that are of current relevance to science and society and which are characterised by high scientific quality and innovative approaches that incorporate multiple disciplinary perspectives. At the same time, they aim to make a difference to society.
- Leibniz Research Alliances are designed to help pool expertise within the Leibniz Association on a broad and sustainable basis. In this way, they generate a critical mass commensurate with their research field, and achieve visibility in the international research landscape, especially since the institutes involved in a Leibniz Research Alliance contribute substantially to its collaborative research through their own individual research activities. This recognisable component of the research capacity (HR, infrastructural and financial contributions) in the programme budgets of the participating Leibniz institutions can therefore be assigned to the relevant Alliance activities and be taken into account, particularly during Leibniz evaluations.
- Leibniz Research Alliances generate new research which is financed in part by third-party funding for the research programme obtained by the institutes involved from sources inside and outside the Leibniz Association.
- Leibniz Research Alliances are funding instruments for programmatic/thematic cooperation, usually across Sections, and are open to collaborations reaching beyond the Leibniz Association. One express goal is to harness the Leibniz Association's potential and expertise in the natural, life and engineering sciences as well as in the humanities and social sciences, employing an interdisciplinary approach to address major topics.
- The institutions involved in a Leibniz Research Alliance are committed to equal opportunities, the promotion of junior researchers and the free sharing of research results. They undertake to observe the rules of good scientific practice.<sup>1</sup>

### **3. Central funds for Leibniz Research Alliances**

- Leibniz Research Alliances can receive funding of up to 300,000 euros per annum over three periods, each lasting four years. The funding is primarily intended for coordinating and showcasing Alliance activities.

### **4. Requirements for setting up a Leibniz Research Alliance**

- Cross-cutting topics of strategic importance: the Research Alliances' targets and research programmes focus on cross-cutting topics which usually require the expertise and potential within the Leibniz Association to be pooled within cross-sectional, interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Cooperation amongst several Leibniz institutions: the requirement for establishing Leibniz Research Alliances is the binding agreement of the members/institutes in-

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<sup>1</sup> For guidance see the [Career Guidelines of the Leibniz Association](#), the [Leibniz Equality Standards](#), the [Open Access Policy of the Leibniz Association 2016-2020](#) and the [Standards for the Appointments to Academic Management Positions within the Leibniz Association](#). For general guidance, see also the [Guidelines for Good Scientific Practice in the Leibniz Association](#).

volved to substantially contribute to the Alliance's collaborative research on the basis of their individual research activities. Moreover, additional institutions may participate, for example as associate partners.

- Cooperation agreement: the institutions involved in Leibniz Research Alliances sign a joint cooperation agreement in which they name a lead institute and their spokesperson. Every Alliance is supported by a coordinator who is tasked with carrying out scientific and managerial duties.
- Scientific Advisory Board: to guarantee ongoing quality assurance, the Leibniz Research Alliances are expected to appoint international Scientific Advisory Boards.

## **5. Procedural information for setting up a Leibniz Research Alliance**

- Initiatives to establish Leibniz Research Alliances originate in the Leibniz Association, particularly in the Sections and Strategy Forums, but also in response to suggestions from networks, project groups, working groups or individuals.
- Suggestions for Leibniz Research Alliances ensuing from initiatives can be presented to the Executive Board in the form of a draft outline by members of the Executive Board.
- In a first step, the Executive Board identifies suitable initiatives, considering particularly their strategic importance for the Leibniz Association and their suitability for this funding instrument.
- In a second step, the Senate Strategic Committee (SAS) receives detailed proposals for the initiatives identified by the Executive Board.
- The SAS examines the Executive Board's suggestions, commissions external reviews and, if appropriate, recommends the Senate to establish a Leibniz Research Alliance.
- The Senate makes the final decision on establishing a Leibniz Research Alliance.

### Administrative aspects

- Proposals for Leibniz Research Alliances must be submitted via the Leibniz Association's online application system. Leibniz Headquarters will provide a template for the proposal and all accompanying documents (finance plan, CVs, cooperation agreements).
- The proposal and all accompanying documents must be submitted in English.
- Applications to extend existing Leibniz Research Alliances may be submitted after three years at the earliest for a second phase and after six years at the earliest for a third phase. The decision-making procedure for extensions is the same as for setting up a new Leibniz Research Alliance.

## 6. Structure of proposal

Proposals should be structured as follows:

### A) Assessment of the first/first two funding phases (only for extensions)

- Implementation of the strategic research programme and milestones achieved
- Strategic further development of joint research programme and planned objectives
- Development of collaborative structures and the resulting academic and strategic added value
- Presentation of the results to date in the form of academic publications, theses/dissertations, funding from third parties, academic conferences, public relations and knowledge-transfer measures, patents and other forms where appropriate
- Prospects for continuation following completion of first or second funding phase
- Assessment by the Scientific Advisory Board of the Leibniz Research Alliance<sup>2</sup>

### B) Quality of the proposal and the quality and suitability of the partners

- Summary of the proposal
- Research programme with milestones and explanations regarding implementation
- Explanation of the proposal's relevance in terms of its contribution to solving current academic, social, environmental or economic problems
- Presentation of the credentials of the researchers involved<sup>3</sup>
- Explanation of the involvement of partners and disciplines relevant for the success of the proposal
- Presentation of the expected scientific benefit through networking

### C) Structural and strategic impact

- Presentation of the strategic importance of the proposal for the Leibniz Association
- Presentation of the synergies in collaboration and added value of the Alliance
- Positioning with regard to thematically comparable structures and institutions
- Presentation of the connections between the Alliance's research programme and agendas of the institutes involved
- Presentation of the public impact through society-related and/or application-inspired research topics
- Presentation of the harnessing of new research fields
- Measures for further internationalisation
- Presentation of the governance structure of the proposed Leibniz Research Alliance

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<sup>2</sup> The report of the Scientific Advisory Board on the first funding phase is uploaded directly in the online system. A template is provided.

<sup>3</sup> The CVs of the designated spokespersons and other programme officers are also uploaded directly in the online system. A template is provided.

- Details concerning HR development and recruitment in accordance with the Leibniz Association's career guidelines, Leibniz equality standards and Leibniz recruitment standards
- Communication concept (measures and target groups)
- If applicable, any necessary measures to protect the intellectual property and ensure knowledge transfer

#### D) Commitment of the research effort dedicated to the Alliance and financial planning

- Presentation of the research effort dedicated to the Alliance
- Explanations of the financial plan

### **7. Assessment criteria**

Assessing the quality of the proposal, and the quality and suitability of the partners<sup>4</sup>

- Academic and methodological excellence by international standards
- Proposal's prospects of success: coherence of goals, maturity of proposal, tangibility and plausibility of research programme and feasibility of proposal
- Relevance: contribution to solving current academic, social, environmental or economic problems
- Academic excellence and credentials of the researchers involved
- Participation of relevant partners and disciplines, scientific benefit of networking

Assessing the structural and strategic impact

- Strategic importance of the proposal for the Leibniz Association
- Synergies in collaboration and added value through the Alliance
- Relationship to thematically comparable structures and institutions
- Connections between the Alliance's research programme and agendas of the institutes involved
- Public impact through society-related and/or application-inspired research topics
- Harnessing new research fields
- International visibility of collaboration and strategy for further internationalisation
- Appropriateness of governance structure
- Aspects of HR development and recruitment in accordance with the Leibniz Association's career guidelines, Leibniz equality standards and Leibniz recruitment standards
- Target group-specific communication and knowledge-transfer measures

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<sup>4</sup> When submitting the application, it is possible to indicate individual biographical circumstances to be taken into account during assessment. These include for example periods of childcare, care of dependents as well as (health) impairments and periods outside of academia.

Assessing the commitment of the research effort and financial planning dedicated to the Alliance

- Commitment and scope of research effort dedicated to the Research Alliance
- Appropriateness of the financial plan

Assessing the first phase or first two phases (only for extensions)

- Implementation of strategic research programme and milestones achieved
- Strategic continuation of joint research programme and objectives
- Development of collaborative structures and the resulting academic and strategic added value
- Results to date in the form of academic publications, theses/dissertations, funding from third parties, academic conferences, public relations and knowledge-transfer measures, patents and other forms where appropriate
- Prospects for continuation following the end of the first or second funding period
- Assessment by the Scientific Advisory Board of the Leibniz Research Alliance

## **8. Reporting and quality assurance**

- Evaluation and ongoing quality assurance of the work conducted by the Leibniz Research Alliance are key duties of the executive and advisory bodies.

At the beginning of the third calendar year of funding, the funded projects submit an interim report (of no more than five pages in length, excluding all appendices), which focuses particularly on the extent to which the milestones formulated in the application have been achieved. Leibniz Headquarters examine this interim report and may submit it to the SAS for information, which may make recommendations to the project. Interim reports are also submitted to the international Scientific Advisory Board. After the end of the funding phase, a final report (of no more than five pages in length, excluding all appendices) will be submitted to the international Scientific Advisory Board and to the SAS. For extension applications, an opinion statement from the Scientific Advisory Board as well as the interim and, if applicable, final report are included in the evaluation of extension applications.

## **9. Contact for questions and advice on applying**

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