

Proposal Preparation Instructions

Project Proposals



Disclaimer: The English translation of this document is provided for informational purposes. In the event of a discrepancy between the English and the German versions, the German text takes precedence.

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These guidelines apply to project proposals under the Research Grants, Emmy Noether, Research Units, Clinical Research Units and Priority Programmes.

A proposal consists of the following three parts:

- A - Proposal Data and Obligations
- B - Project Description
- C - Appendices (always include one academic curriculum vitae per applicant with a list of the applicant's most important scientific results).

To complete an electronic proposal form, and to transmit your proposal data and related documents securely, please use elan, our electronic proposal processing system:

elan.dfg.de

Proposals to the programmes mentioned above can only be submitted via elan.

Please note that electronic proposal submission via elan may not yet be possible in other programmes. For such cases, please note the information provided under "Additional Instructions for Submitting Proposals Outside of elan" in addition to the instructions following immediately below.

Proposals may be submitted either in German or in English.

If applicable, please note the special instructions for Priority Programmes, the Emmy Noether Programme, and for Clinical Trials at the end of this document.

A Proposal Data and Obligations

Here you are asked to enter information on the project and participating individuals and accept the required formal obligations. This information includes a summary of the proposal in German and in English.

Please enter this information via the DFG's electronic proposal form provided in elan:

elan.dfg.de

B Project Description

For the description of your project, please use the appropriate template in German or English provided in elan. Your project description must not exceed 25 pages in total (up to **17 pages for sections 1 through 3** and up to **8 pages as of section 4**).

The template formatting must be retained. In particular, the font should not be smaller than Arial 11 point, with line spacing of no less than 1.2. For the section Project- and subject-related list of publications, the font should not be smaller than Arial 9 point.

In sections 1 and 2 you may refer to an unlimited number of your own works and those of others that are publicly available. Please list the publications you cite here in the Project- and subject-related list of publications (section 3).

Indicate clearly throughout the proposal whenever you are referring to your own work or that of other researchers. The absence of any such indication may constitute a breach of good research practice, and in individual cases may constitute scientific misconduct according to the Rules of Procedure for Dealing with Scientific Misconduct (VerfOwF). Your own preliminary work, if publicly available, is to be listed with the date of publication. If this preliminary work was based on DFG funding, please refer to the respective stage of a funding period in the text of the proposal.

If, in preparing your proposal, you used artificial intelligence (AI) in the form of generative models for text and image creation, please disclose this fact in a scientifically appropriate manner in your proposal. For more information, see the [“Research Integrity” portal](#).

Note the instructions below:

1 Starting point

State of the art and preliminary work

For new proposals please explain briefly and precisely the state of the art in your field in its direct relationship to your project. This description should make clear in which context you situate your own research and in what areas you intend to make a unique, innovative, promising contribution. Indicate the current state of your preliminary work. This description must be concise and understandable without referring to additional literature.

For renewal proposals, please report on your previous work. This report should also be understandable without referring to additional literature.

2 Objectives and work programme

2.1 Anticipated total duration of the project

Please state

- the project's intended duration¹ and how long DFG funds will be necessary,
- for ongoing projects: since when the project has been active.

2.2 Objectives

Please give a concise description of your project's research programme and scientific objectives.

Please indicate if you anticipate results that may be relevant to fields other than science (such as science policy, technology, the economy or society).

2.3 Work programme incl. proposed research methods

For each applicant

Please give a detailed account of the steps planned during the proposed funding period. (For experimental projects, a schedule detailing all planned experiments should be provided.)

The quality of the work programme is critical to the success of a funding proposal. The tasks to be performed within the work programme should correspond to the funds requested. The work programme should therefore indicate and justify what types of funding will be needed and how the funds will be used, providing details on the individual items requested where applicable.

Provide a detailed description of the methods that you plan to use in the project: What methods are already available? What methods need to be developed? What assistance is needed from outside your own group/institute?

¹ Please refer to DFG form 1.01 for information on long-term projects, www.dfg.de/formulare/1_01.

Concepts and starting points for quality-promoting measures that specifically contribute to the validity or plausibility of your research results are welcome here. For more in-depth and subject-specific recommendations, see the “[Research Integrity](#)” portal.

2.4 Handling of research data

If your project uses, generates and/or processes data, then use this section to record key information on the handling of this data (and any underlying objects). Please ensure your descriptions follow the points in the relevant questionnaire (www.dfg.de/forschungsdaten/checkliste) and use the checklist to address the following aspects in particular:

- Characteristics and scope of the data
- Documentation and data quality
- Storage and technical archiving
- Legal obligations and conditions
- Enabling of subsequent reuse and long-term accessibility
- Responsibilities and resources

Please also describe how the institutions involved in the project will contribute to data and information management.

If you have already provided more detailed information on the handling of research data in an explanation as part of your preliminary work, work programme or elsewhere, you may refer to those descriptions and limit yourself to supplementary information at this point.

Should your project not use or generate data to a relevant extent, please explicitly state this to be the case.

Please also note that you can apply for funding to cover project costs associated with the effort involved in collecting research data.

Further information on this topic is available under:

www.dfg.de/proposal_process/research_data

2.5 Relevance of sex, gender and/or diversity

Where applicable, please describe whether and to what extent the sex and/or gender

- of researchers,
- of persons under study,
- of individuals affected by the implementation of research results,
- of animals under study,
- with regard to samples taken from humans or animals,
- in other respects

is relevant to the research project (methods, work programme, objectives, etc.).

Where applicable, please also describe whether and to what extent diversity in terms of, for example, the state of health, ethnic background or culture of

- researchers,
- persons under study,
- individuals affected by an implementation of research results,
- or diversity in other respects

may be significant to the research project (methods, work programme, objectives, etc.). Please explain to what extent these or similar considerations may also be relevant to animals under study or samples taken from humans or animals.

Additional information is available at:

www.dfg.de/diversity_dimensions

3 Project- and subject-related list of publications

This list should **only** contain those works that you **cited** in sections 1 and 2. The font used for the publication list should not be less than Arial 9 point.

For both new proposals and renewal proposals, you can refer to your own works and those of others; there is **no limit** to the **total number** of publications listed. Works which are not in the public domain are not considered publications and cannot be cited. An exception is made for papers that have already been accepted for publication, in which case the manuscript and the editor's confirmation of acceptance must be enclosed.

A maximum of ten of your own publications that are most relevant to the project can be **highlighted** in bold or some other way. Even if there are several applicants, the maximum of ten highlighted works may not be exceeded.

Note that reviewers are not required to read any of the works you cite. This also applies to review sessions that are held by reviewers on site. Here it is possible to provide manuscripts and publications created prior to the review session in order to be able to explain progress reports at the meeting so that reviewers can view them if necessary. However, reviews are only ever based on the text of the actual proposal.

Please note the “Guidelines for Preparing Publication Lists” (DFG form 1.91):

www.dfg.de/formulare/1_91

In the following sections, we ask you for information regarding important topics in research. In keeping with the relevance of each topic for your proposed research project, please provide a concise but sufficiently comprehensive explanation.

If any of these topics are of central importance to the research question of your proposed project, discuss them in context under sections 1 and 2 and reference them accordingly in the following sections.

The following sections (as of section 4) must not exceed 8 pages in total

4 Supplementary information on the research context

4.1 Ethical and/or legal aspects of the project

4.1.1 General ethical aspects

Taking into account the discipline-specific standards and ethical regulations relevant to your project, indicate whether you anticipate any risks and/or harm to individuals or groups and/or the potential for other negative effects that might be posed by your research. If so, how do you intend to address these issues within the project?

In general, applicants should examine whether their projects require a statement by an ethics committee.

4.1.2 Descriptions of proposed investigations on humans, human materials or identifiable data

Please describe the ethical and/or legal aspects of the experimental design:

- criteria for the selection of test persons,
- justification of the number of test persons or sample size,
- description of potential risks and precautions taken,
- explanation provided for test persons and method of informed consent.

Note that in addition to accepting the formal obligations in part A, an ethics committee vote may have to be included as well. The use of human material obtained for diagnostic purposes also requires a statement by the chair of the local ethics committee.

4.1.3 Descriptions of proposed investigations involving experiments on animals

Note that in addition to accepting the formal obligations in part A with regard to compliance with the regulations and provisions of the German Animal Welfare Act and the German Experimental Animals Ordinance, the planned animal experiments must be described. Please explain how the principle of the 3Rs (replacement, reduction and refinement) will be implemented with regard to various aspects of scientific validity. If you have addressed these topics in previous sections, reference them here.

Additional information and guidelines are available in the publication [Animal Experimentation in Research: The 3Rs Principle and the Validity of Scientific Research](#).

4.1.4 Descriptions of projects involving genetic resources (or associated traditional knowledge) from a foreign country

For research conducted abroad involving biological materials (or associated traditional knowledge) or research on biological objects originating from outside Germany, note that such projects may be subject to the regulatory requirements of the Nagoya Protocol under the Convention on Biological Diversity and the access and benefit-sharing (ABS) portions contained therein. Guidance on conducting such projects can be found, for example, in the publication “Proposals for Research and/or Development Projects Involving Access to Genetic Resources and/or Traditional Knowledge Associated with Genetic Resources”, published by the DFG Permanent Senate Commission on Fundamental Issues of Biological Diversity:

www.dfg.de/en/dfg_profile/statutory_bodies/senate/biological_diversity

Please comment on the ABS requirements that affect your project and indicate any steps you have taken or plan to take to fulfil these requirements. Discuss the role of your project’s cooperation partner with regard to the provider country (the country providing access to the material/traditional knowledge). Explain what materials may be transported to Germany. Note that in addition to access and benefit-sharing agreements with the provider country, a declaration of due diligence may also be required in line with the German law “Gesetz zur Umsetzung der Verpflichtungen nach dem Nagoya-Protokoll und zur Durchführung der Verordnung (EU) No 511/2014 sowie zur Änderung des Patentgesetzes”.

4.1.5 Explanations regarding any possible safety-related aspects

4.1.5.1 “Dual Use Research of Concern”; foreign trade law

Please check whether there are indications in your planned research project that possible research results could produce knowledge, products or technologies that might be directly misused for significant harmful purposes (Dual Use Research of Concern, DURC).

If there are such indications, please familiarise yourself with the recommendations issued by the DFG and Leopoldina on handling security-relevant research (see DFG and Leopoldina Handbook on Freedom and Responsibility in Research, Recommendations for Handling Security-Relevant Research, last revised 28 May 2014). In your proposal, describe how the risk/benefit ratio is to be assessed and what measures are planned to minimise the risk.

If due to the regulations at your university or research institution, an ethics committee for security-relevant research (KEF) or a comparable body is to be involved in advance and asked to issue a statement on the project, please include this statement with the proposal. For further information, see the DFG website on [handling security-relevant research](#).

Projects must comply with foreign trade regulations (especially the War Weapons Control Act [Kriegswaffenkontrollgesetz], EC Regulation No. 428/2009 [EC Dual Use Regulation], the Foreign Trade and Payments Act [Außenwirtschaftsgesetz], the Foreign Trade and Payments Ordinance [Außenwirtschaftsverordnung] or embargo regulations) relating to the non-proliferation strategy and the handling of potentially critical goods, including technologies, software and sensitive knowledge transfer; applicants are advised to examine their projects accordingly. Information for researchers is available on the website of the German Federal Office for Economic Affairs and Export Control (BAFA)².

If you require further clarification, please contact BAFA directly. For projects subject to licensing, please note that licences must be obtained from the responsible authority prior to beginning research on the project.

² https://www.bafa.de/EN/Foreign_Trade/Export_Control/Export_Control_and_Academia/export_control_academia_node.html

4.1.5.2 Risks in international cooperation

International scientific cooperation is one of the basic principles of research. However, it is essential, particularly in the case of cooperation with researchers in countries where misuse of certain research results is to be suspected³, to take potential opportunities for abuse seriously, place them in perspective with the benefits of such cooperation and make informed trade-off decisions. Use this space where applicable to reflect on how the risk/benefit ratio is to be assessed with regard to the research subject, research partners and research conditions and what measures are planned to minimise risks. In doing so, please refer to the recommendations on “Dealing with Risks in International Research Cooperation” (www.dfg.de/risiken_int_kooperationen_en) and the aspects of assessment and reflection recommended in this paper.

4.1.6 Considerations on aspects of ecological sustainability in the planning and implementation of the project

In research as well, there is an urgent need for a further shift towards sustainable practices. Use this space to reflect on how sustainability considerations are taken into account in the research processes proposed. Here, you are expected to provide a brief statement that refers specifically to the work programme to be undertaken in this project. Research quality is the pivotal factor for the funding decision, however, so this is the priority in terms of planning the research; for this reason, resource-saving and emission-reducing measures should not result in restrictions in the desired knowledge gain. If increased funding is required due to more sustainable research approaches, this can be taken into account when applying for funds. For further information, see the cross-disciplinary catalogue of guiding questions:

www.dfg.de/reflection_sustainability

4.2 Employment status information

For each applicant, state the last name, first name, and employment status (including duration of contract and funding body, if on a fixed-term contract).

4.3 First-time proposal data

Only if applicable: Last name, first name of first-time applicant.

³ Indications concerning these states can for instance be derived from information issued by the Federal Foreign Office or reports released by the German domestic intelligence services, but also from national and international regulations and agreements, as well as from detailed guidelines relating to export restrictions.

When assessing and evaluating the achievements of researchers, the respective individual career stage must be taken into account in each case. For the purposes of review and evaluation, however, it is still possible to indicate that you consider yourself to have limited experience of (DFG) proposal submission by indicating that your proposal is a first-time proposal.

The following criteria can serve as a guide:

Please do not designate your proposal as a first-time proposal when applying for a publication grant, for the establishment of a Scientific Network, or for funding under the Walter Benjamin Programme. If you are submitting a “first-time proposal” and it is part of a joint proposal, please note that your independent project share should be clearly distinct from that of the others.

If you have already submitted a proposal as a first-time applicant for an individual research grant, for a project as part of a Collaborative Research Centre or for a Research Unit and have been informed of the funding decision, you already have experience of proposal submission so you should not designate yourself as a first-time DFG applicant. If you have submitted a “first-time proposal” and it was rejected, you may resubmit the application, in revised form, as a first-time proposal for the same project.

Proposals under the Emmy Noether Programme should not be labelled “first-time proposals” as, by definition, they are submitted in an advanced career phase.

4.4 Composition of the project group

List only those individuals who will work on the project but will not be paid out of the project funds. State each person’s name, academic title, employment status, and type of funding.

Please list separately the individuals paid by your institution and those paid using other third-party funding (including fellowships).

Please give appropriate consideration to diversity when composing the members of the project group (regardless of the individual funding sources). For additional information, see:

www.dfg.de/diversity/en

4.5 Researchers in Germany with whom you have agreed to cooperate on this project

If you will be pursuing your project jointly with researchers working in Germany and have shared responsibility for the conduct of the project, list the names of these individuals under co-applicants. The term co-applicant refers to individuals who are eligible to submit proposals but who neither request nor receive project funding.

In addition, list the names of researchers in Germany with whom you will be collaborating on the proposed project but who will **not** share responsibility for the conduct of the project, and include a copy of the cooperation agreement, where applicable, with your proposal.

For clinical trials, please also provide the name of the biometrician or statistician responsible for the trial.

4.6 Researchers abroad with whom you have agreed to cooperate on this project

If you will be conducting your project in close collaboration with researchers based outside Germany, please list them as cooperation partners and indicate

- whether you will be pursuing the project within a **joint call** between the DFG and a partner organisation. If so, list the name of the call and indicate who will lead the project from the partner side.
- whether you will be submitting your project under one of the following DFG **international funding measures**:
 - cooperation with developing countries ([DFG form 54.013](#))
 - Middle East cooperation ([DFG form 54.016](#))
 - cross-border cooperation with Austria and/or Switzerland in a Lead Agency Procedure (DACH) ([DFG form 54.018](#))
 - cross-border cooperation with Luxembourg in a Lead Agency Procedure (DLux) ([DFG form 54.015](#)).
 - cross-border cooperation with the Autonomous Province of Bolzano-South Tyrol in a Lead Agency Procedure ([DFG form 54.017](#))
 - cross-border cooperation under the Weave Lead Agency Procedure ([DFG form 54.019](#))
- if, excluding the cases listed above, significant project contributions by cooperation partners outside Germany are planned (“**general international research cooperation**”). The DFG assumes this is the case when written cooperation

agreements are entered into with the foreign partner. The agreement must be submitted with the proposal.

Please make sure to select the appropriate supplementary classification in elan and note the additional instructions provided in the relevant proposal instructions.

4.7 Researchers with whom you have collaborated scientifically within the past three years

This information will assist the DFG's Head Office in avoiding potential conflicts of interest during the review process.

4.8 Project-relevant cooperation with commercial enterprises

If you will be conducting your project in cooperation with a commercial enterprise, please note the EU guidelines on state aid⁴ or contact your research institution in this regard.

If you are planning to cooperate with an application partner on a transfer project, i.e. a project that tests the results generated by a DFG-funded research project or develops basic-research findings into prototypes or exemplary applications, note the supplementary instructions contained in DFG form 54.014.

www.dfg.de/formulare/54_014

4.9 Project-relevant participation in commercial enterprises

Please indicate if you are the owner of a commercial enterprise or a stakeholder in one (e.g. a director). If so, please state how your research project is linked to the company's production branch or activities.

4.10 Scientific equipment

List larger instruments that will be available to you for the project. These may include large computer facilities if computing capacity will be needed.

If you are applying for instruments that are available at your institution, but are not at the project's disposal, please explain why this is the case.

⁴ Framework for State Aid for Research and Development and Innovation (2014/C 198/01)

4.11 Other submissions

List any funding proposals for this project and/or major instrumentation previously submitted to a third party.

4.12 Other information

Please use this section for any additional information you feel is relevant which has not been provided elsewhere.

5 Requested modules/funds

Explain each item for each applicant (stating last name, first name).

Note additional instructions on submitting proposal modules in the relevant module guidelines.

For electronic proposal submissions, please note that euro amounts will automatically be rounded to the nearest hundred, which could result in slight discrepancies in the staffing amounts.

C Appendices

The proposal must include each applicant's academic curriculum vitae with a list of their most important scientific results. The template provided (DFG form 53.200) must be used for this purpose:

www.dfg.de/formulare/53_200_elan

To enable reviewers to assess an applicant's scientific track record appropriately, applicants may indicate in their CVs any circumstances that might have hampered their scientific work, for example, periods in which they were unable to work continuously due to childcare obligations or due to prolonged serious illness or disability.

Each academic curriculum vitae must include the list of the most important publications or published results of the applicant in question. The information can relate to the person's entire academic career; the publications need not be directly related to the proposed project. The list is to be divided into two parts:

- The first **mandatory** category (A) may contain articles in peer-reviewed journals, peer-reviewed contributions to conferences or anthology volumes, and book publications; a maximum of ten publications.
- The number of publications listed in the second **optional** category (B) is like-wise limited to a maximum of ten. Any other form of published results can be cited here (e.g. non-peer-reviewed contributions to conferences or anthology volumes, articles on pre-print servers, data sets, protocols of clinical trials, software packages, patents applied for and granted, blog contributions, infrastructures or transfer). You may also indicate other forms of academic output here, such as contributions to the (technical) infrastructure of an academic community (including in an international context) and contributions to science communication.

Please note the "Guidelines for Preparing Publication Lists" (DFG form 1.91):

www.dfg.de/formulare/1_91

Additional appendices should be included if applicable (e.g. a statement from the host institution, ethics statements, research papers, etc.).

For **proposals submitted electronically via elan**, you will be asked to upload the required documents before submission. Please make sure that the security settings for the PDF documents allow your documents to be read, copied and printed, and note the maximum size of 10 MB per document.

Save PDF documents according to the naming protocol listed at the end of this document to facilitate the processing of your proposal.

Special Instructions

I Priority Programme

For individual project proposals within an established Priority Programme, note that the funding duration (part A of the proposal) and the funding periods are specified in the call for proposals.

For the project description (part B of the proposal) note the following:

Each proposal must be accompanied by a description of how the project is integral to the Priority Programme, both in terms of subject matter and organisation. This includes a description of the cooperation with others participating within the Priority Programme. The envisaged realisation of the project in cooperation with other applicants may be demonstrated in particular by the joint training of early career researchers, or the use of methods by multiple projects as part of a network.

All applicants involved in submitting a proposal within an established Priority Programme are obliged to promptly provide the overall coordinator with all of the information necessary for drawing up the interim reports and the final report for the Priority Programme.

II Clinical Trials

Studies that aim to prove the efficacy of a new therapeutic, diagnostic or prognostic method can only be funded in the Clinical Trials Programme. Such studies include **feasibility studies**⁵ and **interventional trials**.⁶ The programme also funds **observational trials**, provided that the study investigates a highly relevant research question that cannot demonstrably be answered using an interventional design. Further information on the types of trials can be found in the programme guidelines:

www.dfg.de/formulare/17_01

Experimental studies on healthy individuals and exploratory studies on patients that seek to establish a new method or investigate a mechanism of action are not eligible under this programme. Exploratory and/or retrospective observational studies, epidemiological studies with the aim of examining the incidence and/or prevalence of diseases, reviews, meta-analyses,

⁵ In terms of drug trial phases, these are phase II trials.

⁶ In terms of drug trial phases, these are phase III trials.

and studies focused purely on health economics are also not eligible under this programme. Funding for such studies is available under other DFG funding instruments, such as the Research Grants Programme or other individual grants programmes and coordinated programmes.

If you plan to conduct any experiments involving humans, including identifiable samples taken from humans and identifiable data, a statement by the local ethics committee must always be submitted. Where an intervention is part of the study, a declaration of compliance with Good Clinical Practice (GCP) and on the legal sponsor function must also be included where applicable. Please contact the DFG's Head Office prior to submitting your proposal should you have any questions.

III Emmy Noether Programme

If you will be applying for a position as head of an independent junior research group or other funds, please note that this programme has a total duration of six years consisting of two funding periods (36 + 36 months). Please request funding for the six-year period in accordance with this structure.

Please submit as appendices your doctoral certificate, the employer's statement/sample contract (or the confirmation of employment letter and statement from your clinical employer if you opt for a temporary substitute position) and a description of your international research experience.

Include your doctoral thesis if it is included in any of your publication lists.

Additional Instructions for Submitting Proposals Outside of elan

If your proposal cannot be submitted via elan, please use the available templates (see below) or use the same outlines (same numbering and complete header for each section) and formatting as provided.

Submit your proposal electronically on a CD-ROM, preferably as PDF files (otherwise as RTF files) without password protection or other restrictions; the document security settings should allow your documents to be read, copied and printed.

For A: Proposal Data and Obligations

Use the Proposal Data and Obligations template:

www.dfg.de/formulare/54_011

Please only submit this form on paper, with the original signatures of all applicants, along with the aforementioned CD-ROM that includes all the documentation relevant to the proposal.

For B: Project Description

Use the Project Description template:

www.dfg.de/formulare/54_012

In addition to the template instructions provided in part B, please note the following:

Requested modules/funds

State which modules you would like to submit for funding. Structure your funding requests according to the module guidelines and state the desired funding amount for each item (e.g. Basic Module: 1. Funding for staff, 2. Funding for direct project costs, 2.1 Equipment up to €10,000, software and consumables, 2.2 Travel, 2.3 Visiting researchers, 2.4 Experimental animals, 2.5 Other, 2.6 Project-related publication expenses, 3. Funding for instrumentation).

For each module, give subtotals and totals. Then explain your funding requests in detail.

For C: Appendices

Include all proposal appendices as separate PDF documents (less than 10 MB per document).

Save PDF documents according to the naming protocol listed at the end of this document to facilitate the processing of your proposal.

Naming Protocol for Proposal Documents

Document	Document name
instrumentation quote (Angebote zu Geräten)	Angebot_<instrument type>_<manufacturer>
employment offer (Arbeitsplatzzusage)	Arbeitsplatzzusage
project description – part B of the proposal (Beschreibung des Vorhabens)	Beschreibung_des_Vorhabens
Ethics statement (Ethikvotum)	Ethics statement (Ethikvotum)
staff questionnaire (Fragebogen Mitarbeiter)	Fragebogen_<last name of respondent>
Curriculum vitae with a list of scientific results (Wissenschaftlicher Lebenslauf mit Verzeichnis wissenschaftlicher Ergebnisse)	CV_PubList_<person's last name>
certificates (Zeugnisse) in one document	Zeugnisse_<person's last name>
Accepted manuscripts; acknowledgement of acceptance (Zulässige Manuskripte; erforderliche Annahmebestätigung)	<year>_<last name_author>_<keyword> Bestätigung_<year>_< last name_author >_<keyword>
For proposals submitted outside of elan: Proposal Data and Obligations (part A of proposal)	Daten_zum_Antrag_und_Verpflichtungen