



DFG Funding Opportunities for Postdocs

14 October 2025

Anna Böhme | Anjana Buckow
Margret Heinze | Saskia Parobij

Contents

1. The DFG?
2. What are my funding options?
3. From submission to decision?



Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft e.V.

Independent association

under private law

Researchers have the majority

in decision-making
committees

DFG Members

are 99 leading universities,
non-university research
institutions, scientific
associations and
academies



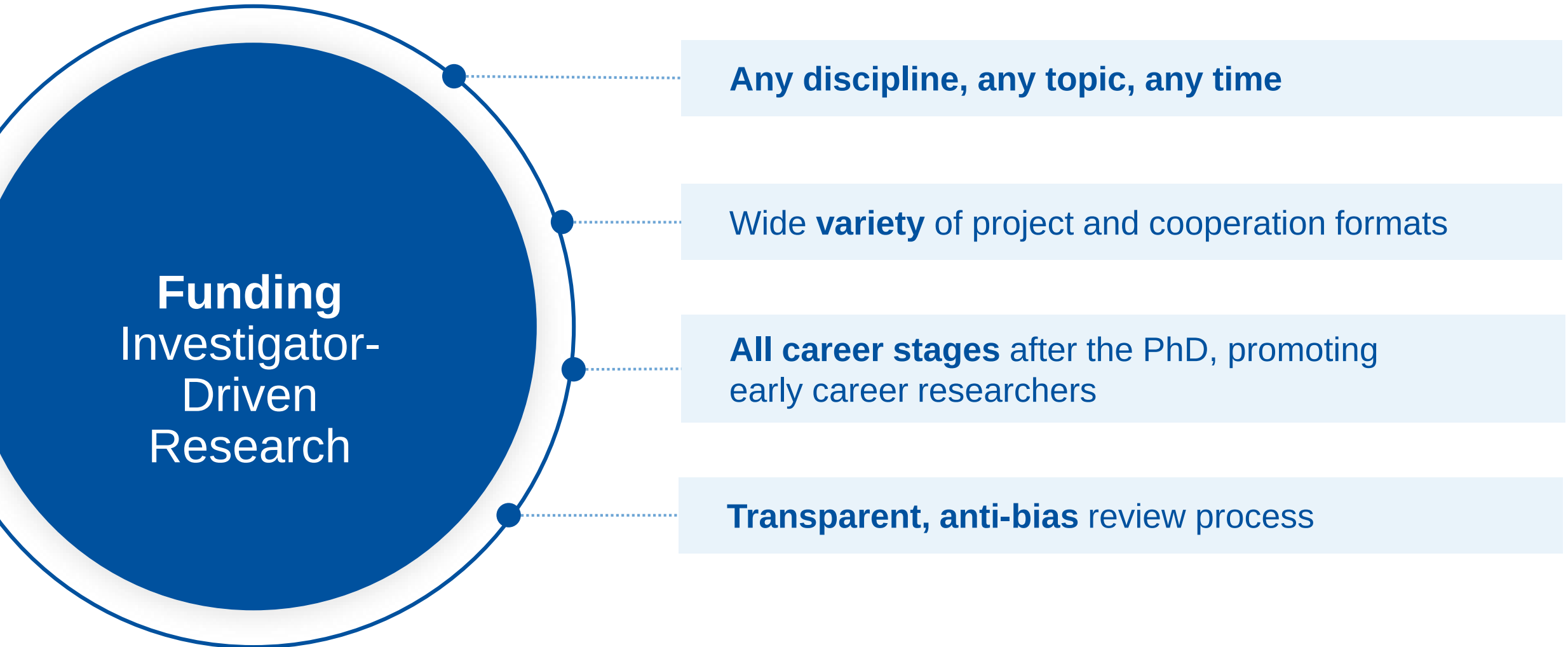
Funding

knowledge-driven
research



Germany's largest independent research funding organisation

3.9 € billion budget (2024)



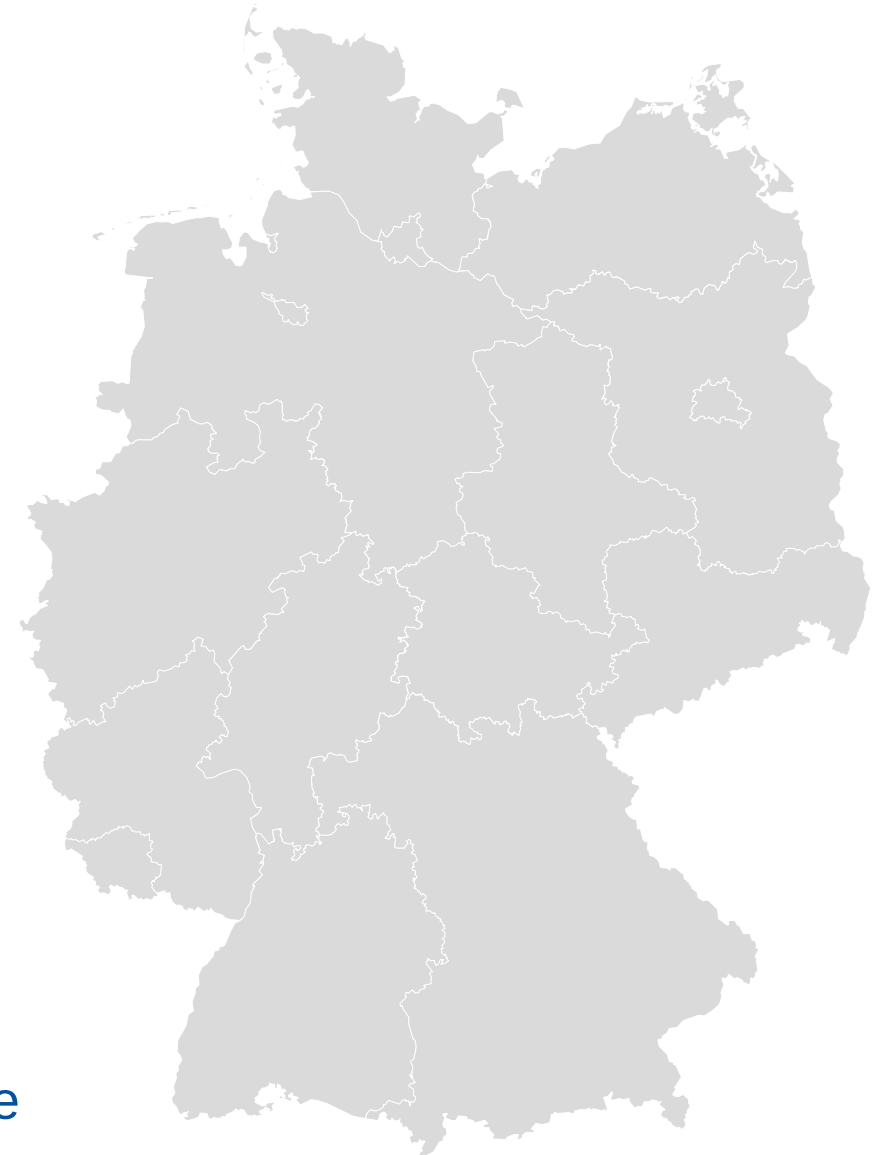
Who is eligible to apply for DFG funding?

Researchers

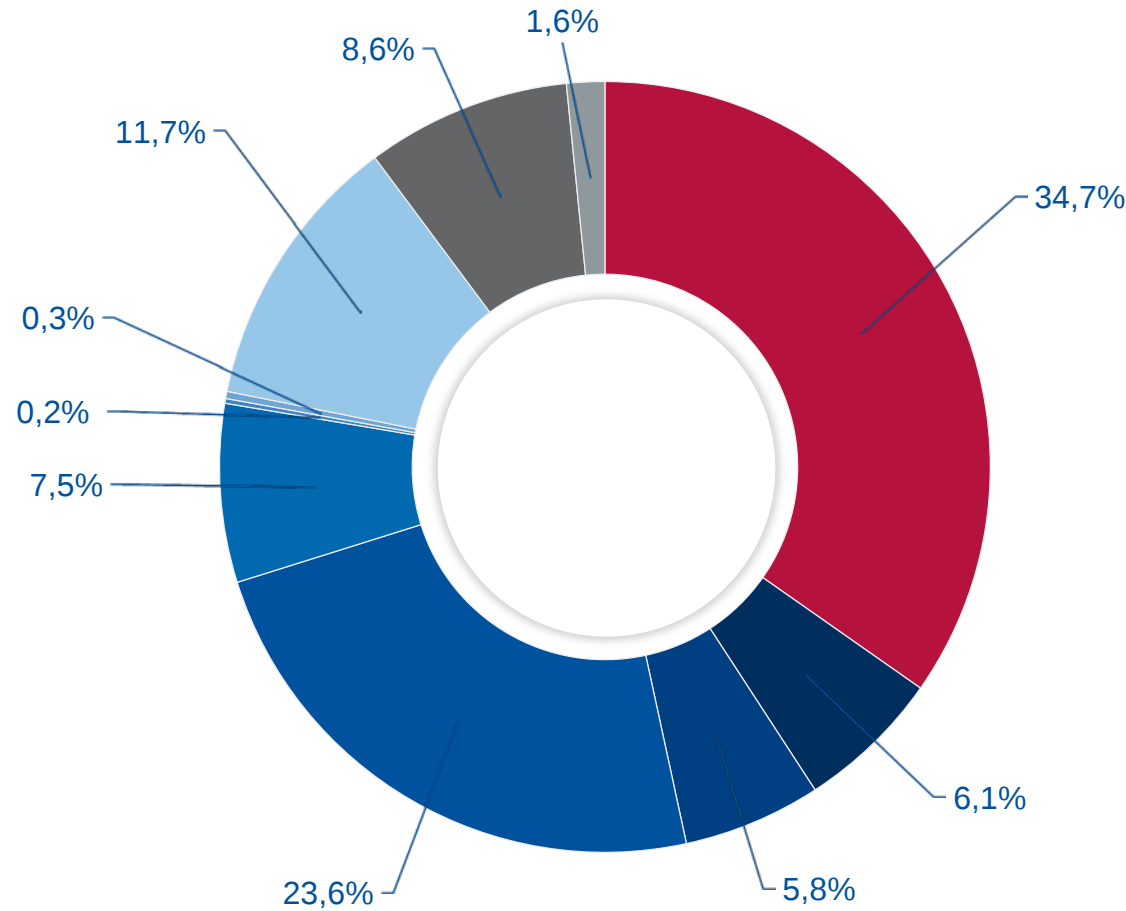
...who have completed their scientific training,
i.e. **who hold a doctorate***

...who (would like to) work
in Germany

*earliest date: upon submission to the examination office

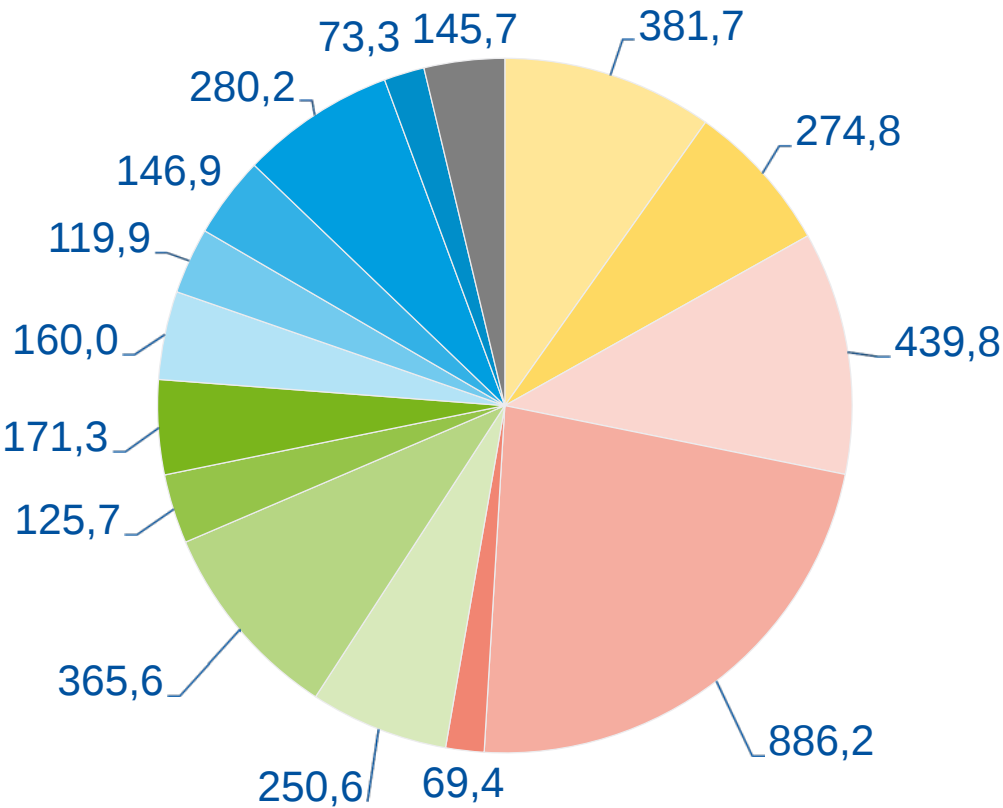


Funding by Programme for 2024 (in Mio € and %)



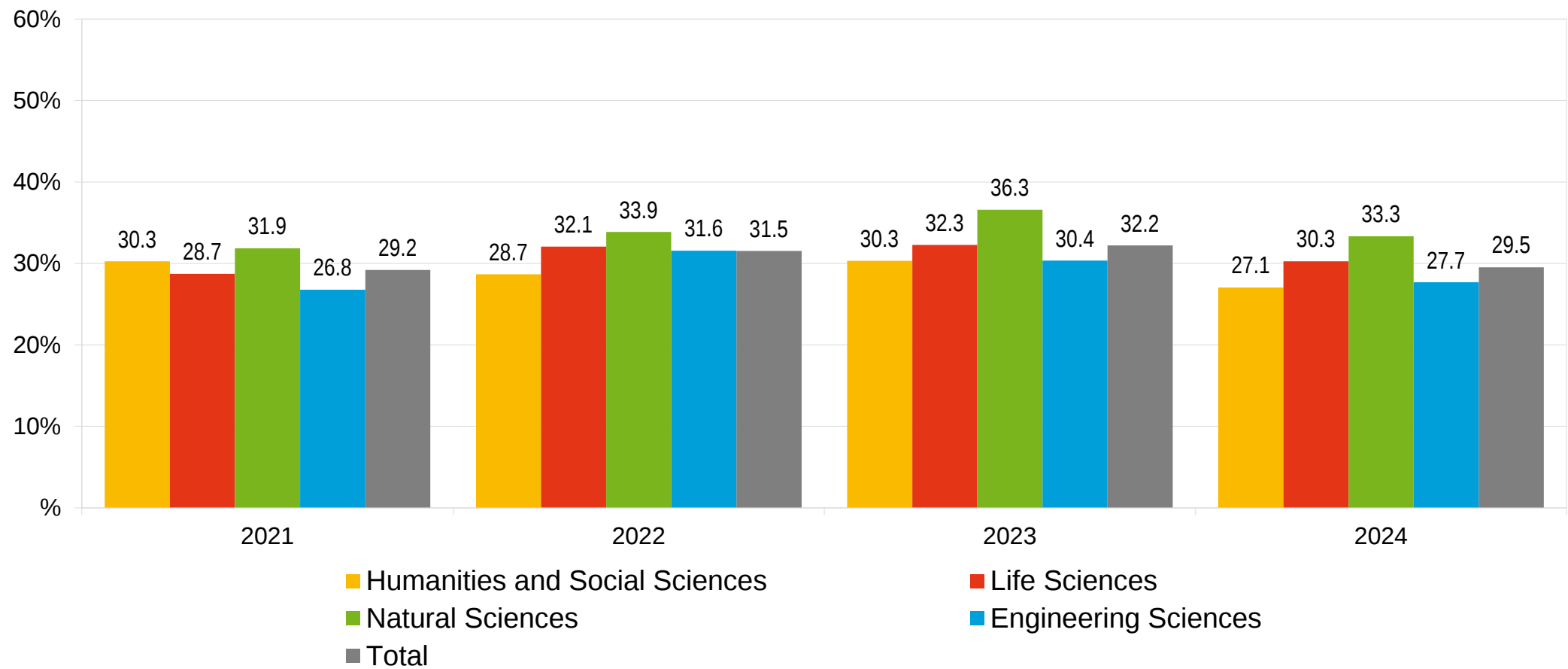
- Individual grants programme: 1352,3 Mio. €
- Research Units: 238,0 Mio. €
- Priority Programmes: 224,2 Mio. €
- Collaborative Research Centres: 917,2 Mio. €
- Research Training Groups: 291,3 Mio. €
- Research Impulses: 7,5 Mio. €
- Research Centres: 12,6 Mio. €
- Exzellenzstrategie: 453,4 Mio. €
- Infrastructure funding: 334,2 Mio. €
- Prizes, other: 60,5 Mio. €

DFG Funding by Subject Area (2024, in €m)



- Humanities
- Social and Behavioural Sciences
- Biology
- Medicine
- Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary
- Chemistry
- Physics
- Mathematics
- Geosciences
- Mechanical and Industrial Engineering
- Thermal Engineering/Process Engineering
- Materials Science and Engineering
- Computer Science, Systems & Electrical Engineering
- Construction Engineering and Architecture
- Interdisciplinary

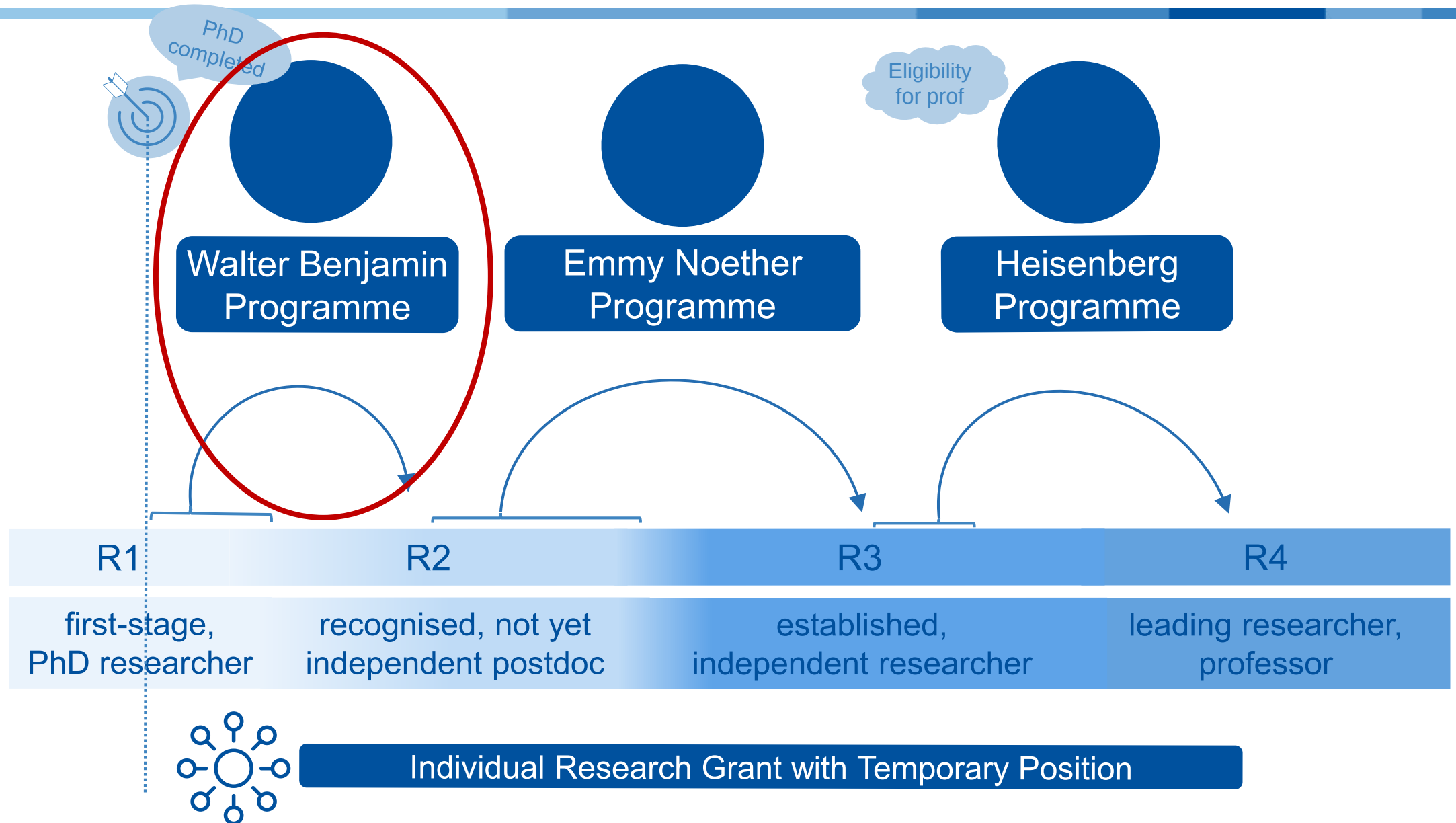
Funding rates* in the individual grants programmes by scientific discipline
2021 to 2024 (in %)



* The funding rate (or success rate) was calculated by dividing the number of awards by the number of proposals reviewed.
Source: New Individual grants



DFG Funding for Early Career Stages





Walter Benjamin Programme

Mobility

Move to a new
research institution

Experience career support

Autonomy

Conduct your own
research project

Come to / stay in **Germany**
or **go abroad** – or both





Own Project

First own, defined research project; scientific support

Step towards more scientific responsibility and independence



Career Development

Own career planning is part of the application

The scientific potential for further career steps is an evaluation criterion



Research Institution

Research Institution that allows publication of the results

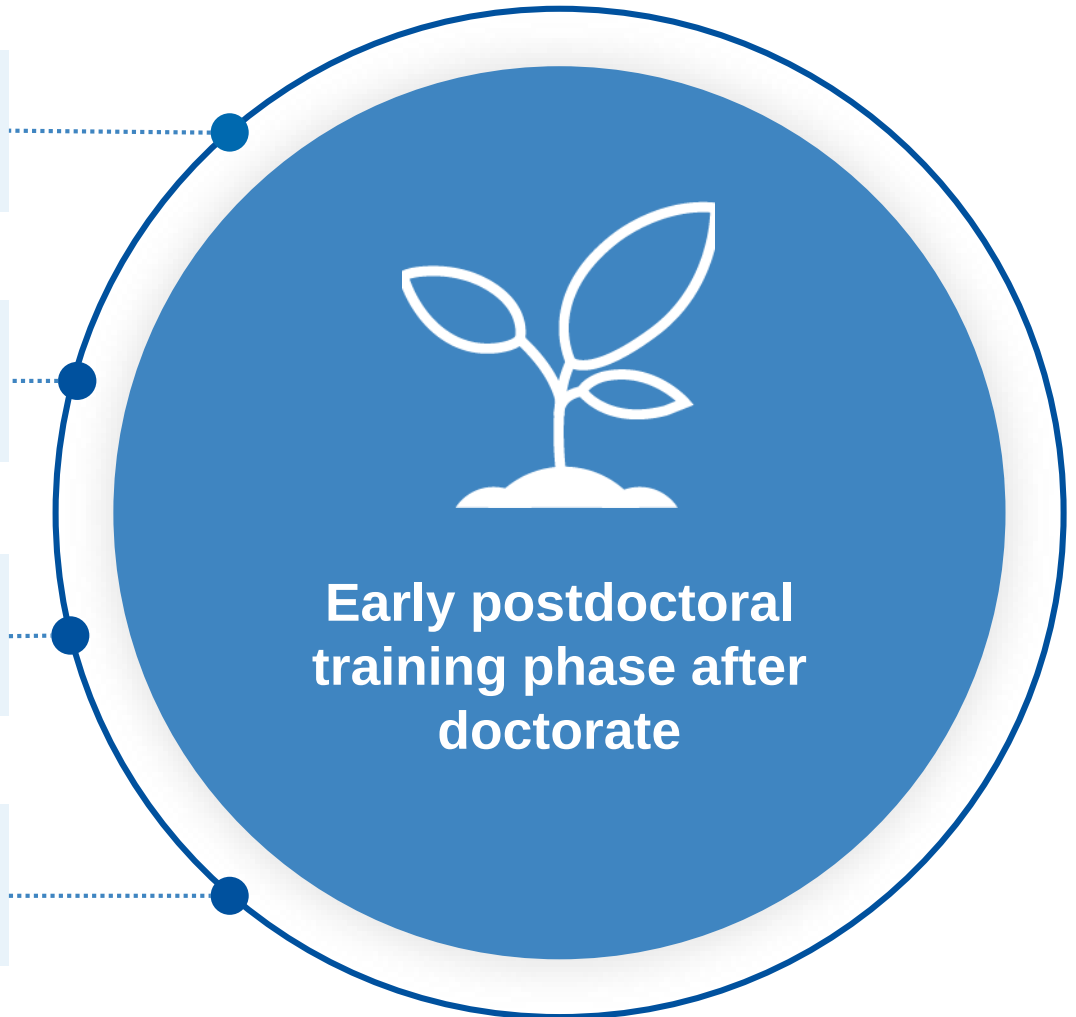
Non-profit context

No deadline x-years after doctorate

Scientific support by an experienced researcher & development measures needed

EU definition R2 „Recognised Researcher“

No indicators of independent project experience





Irrelevant:

Nationality



Current employment status



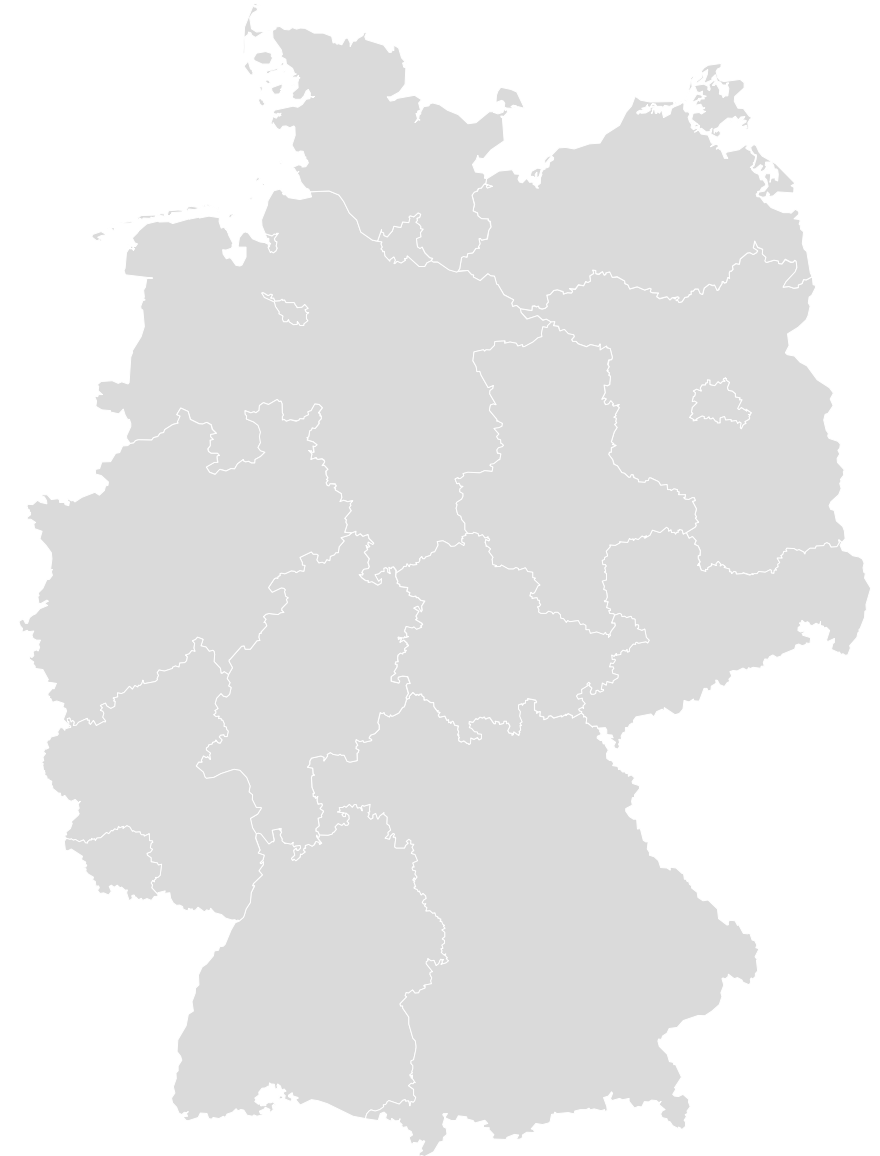
Current commercial employment
(exceptions for the fellowship)



Earliest date to submit proposal

As soon as the dissertation is submitted
to the responsible examination office

- No further personal requirements other than the early postdoc phase
- Previous affiliation to Germany's academic research system is not relevant



Affiliation to Germany's academic research system is assumed

You **EITHER** have completed the majority of your schooling and university education in Germany

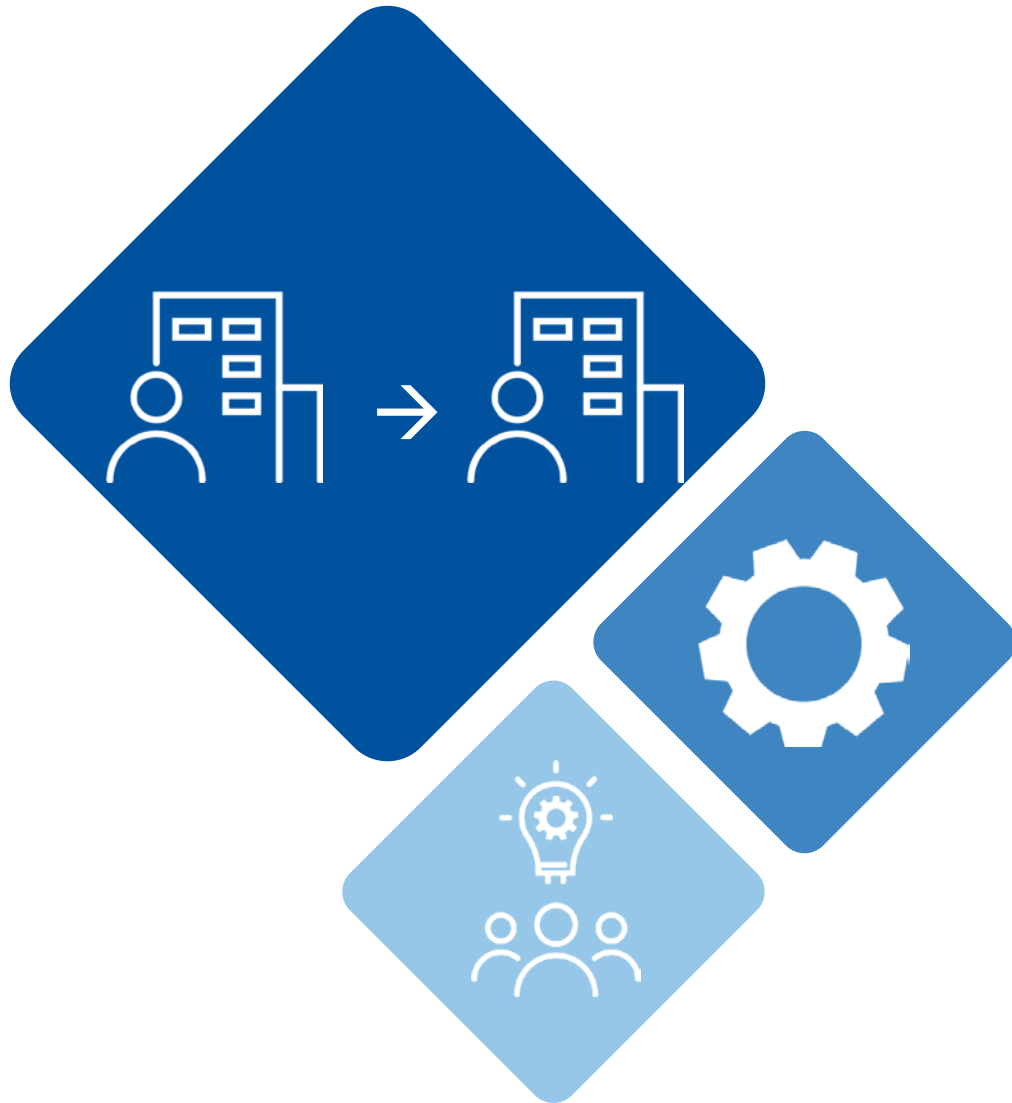
- AND have not spent more than 3 years abroad for research purposes since completing your doctorate
- AND at the time of application, you have not yet worked for more than one year at the host institution



OR you have completed the majority of your schooling and university education abroad

- AND at the time of application, you have been working in Germany scientifically and continuously for at least the last three years.

In this case, the application must be submitted while still being scientifically affiliated in Germany.



As a rule, a change of institution is required

Criterion of mobility applies consistently for the entire funding period

Supporting person should not be the doctorate supervisor

Exeptions

- Family reasons (local childcare, own health condition, etc.)
- Highly specialized project, which can only be carried out at the current institution

→ Required in the application: Justification of a thematic mobility & justification of exceptional case

Position in Germany

- E13 TVöD/TV-L (or position for temporary substitutes for clinicians)
- + allowance for direct project costs: € 250/month
- You are employed by your host institution

Fellowship abroad

- 2.188€/month
- + allowance for direct project costs: € 313/month
- + foreign allowance
- + cost of living allowance
- + child allowance (if applicable)
- + possibility of 6-months return grant
- Use the award calculator on the DFG website

→ Host institution needs to provide all additional project costs

Child Allowance

- € 400 per month for the first child
- € 100 per month for each additional child



Childcare

- Extention by max. 12 months
- OR
- Reimbursement of childcare costs (up to $12 \times € 2188 = \text{max. } € 26.256$)
- OR
- A combination of extension and reimbursement of childcare costs

Content of the statement by the host researcher (Walter Benjamin Position):

- **Ensure work environment**
- **Scientific support** in terms of feedback on the progress of the project, scientific advice
- Advice on career prospects and development of your own career profile, **concrete measures** for individual support
- **Provision of funds** to the extent necessary to carry out the project



This is not a letter of recommendation, but shows the concrete **offer of support agreed upon** with the host before the application is submitted.

- Walter Benjamin Programme <-> Individual Research Grants (incl. Temporary Positions for Principal Investigators as project leadership)
→ differ in their funding goals, requirements and eligibility criteria
- The **Walter Benjamin Programme** aims to fund the academic career of the applicant. A stay at a host institution in an **early career phase** is funded. The subject of the peer review is therefore also the **career potential** of the applicant. The project is scientifically accompanied by an experienced person.
- The **Individual Research Grants** (incl. the module Temporary Positions for Principal Investigators), aims to fund an independent project; the **quality of the project** is the focus of the evaluation, but not the career development of the project leader.
- parallel applications are not possible

Temporary Positions for
Principle Investigators
(Individual Research Grant)

Walter Benjamin Position

Commonalities

Enables the realisation of research projects in Germany that are limited in time and topic

Differences

Focus on project

All career phases after the doctorate

Independent project management

Mobility not condition for eligibility

Funding period generally 3 years
(extension option)

Possibility of a stay abroad for one third
of the funding period

Focus on applicant

Exclusively early career phase after doctorate

Supervised research

Mobility required

Funding period max. 2 years (extension only in
exceptional cases)

Possibility of a stay abroad for a maximum of 3
months



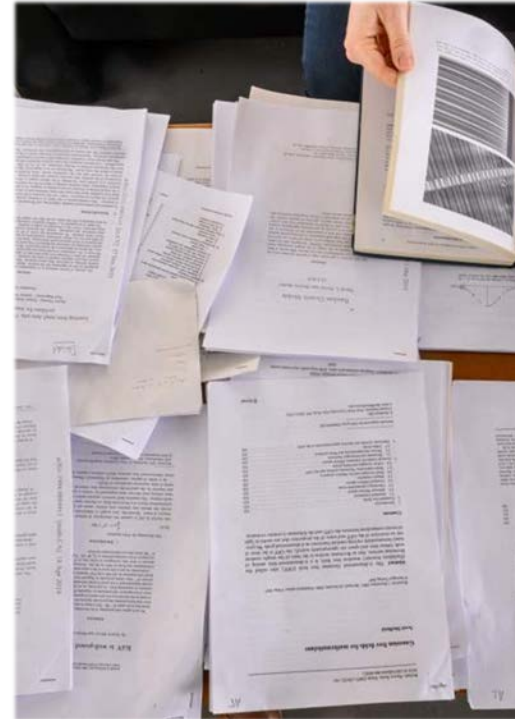
Do I belong to the target group? → early postdoctoral phase; in doubt contact the responsible DFG programme contact for your field of science

Candidates who want to apply for the fellowship and only partly completed their schooling and university education in Germany → check your eligibility

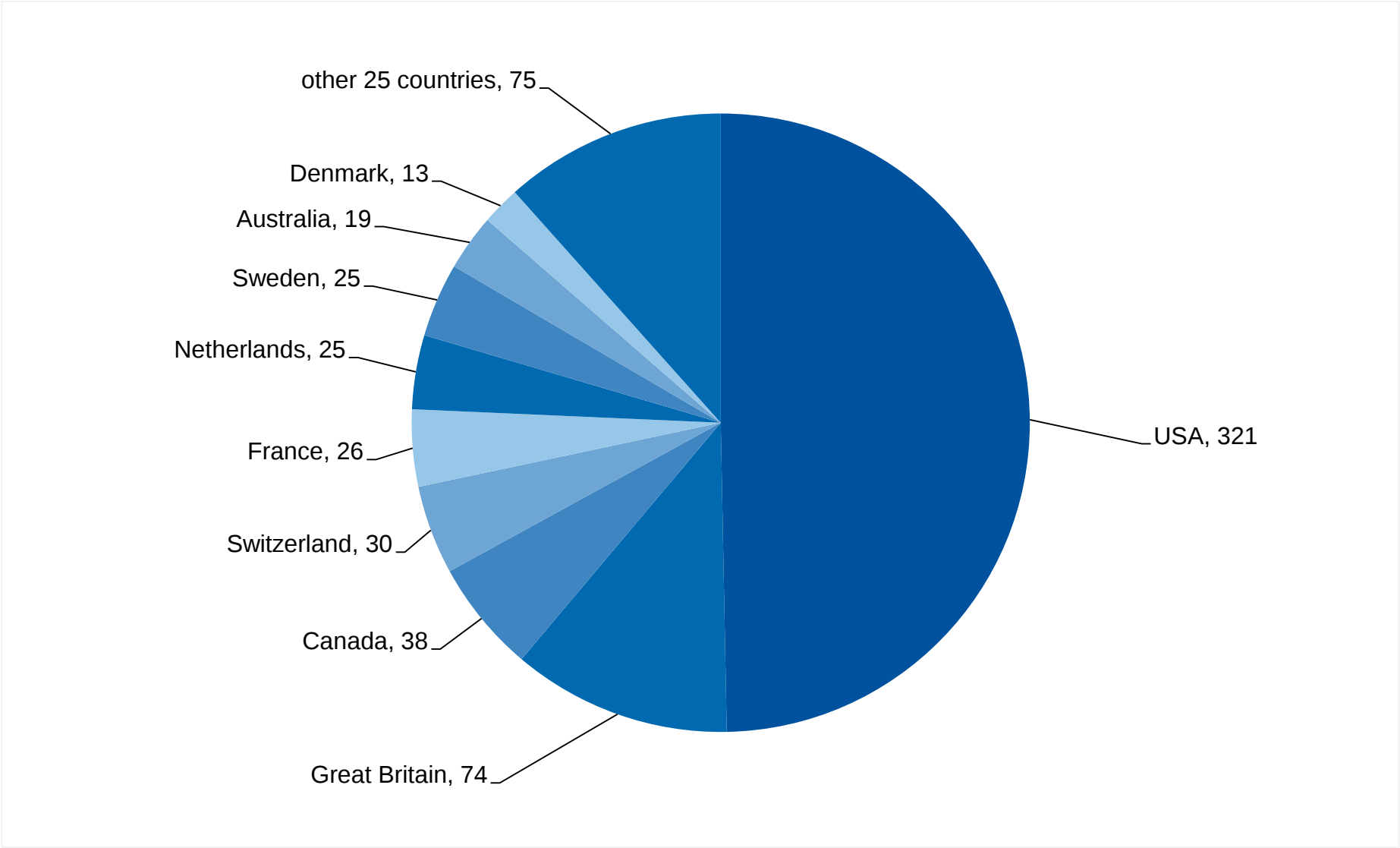
Where is the perfect institution? Who is the perfect host researcher? → subject of the review process

What funds/services do I need? Can I get by with the lump-sum research funds?

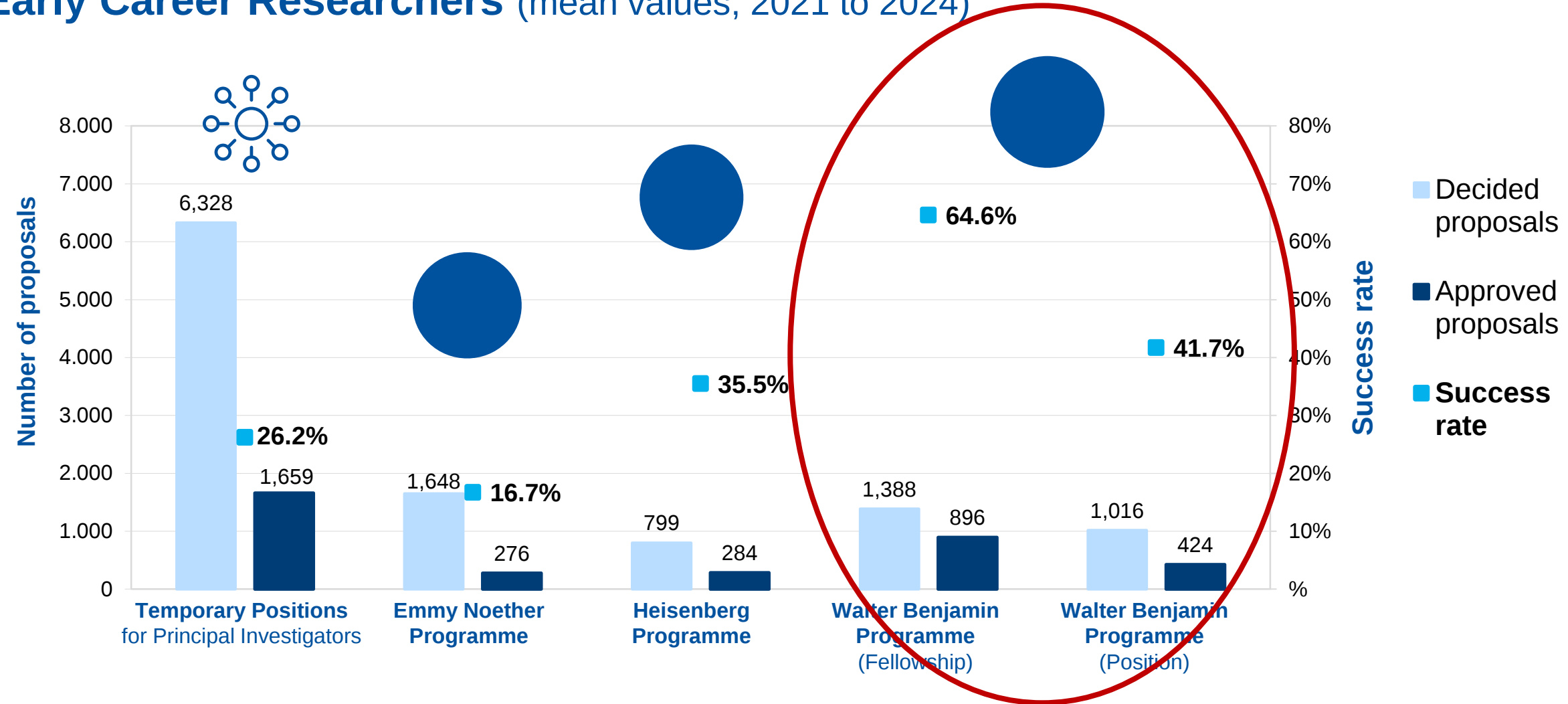
What does the supporting person do? → negotiate which concrete measures; attach a written “host confirmation” (abroad) or “statement” (in Germany)



Destinations for Research Visits Abroad 2024



Numbers of Proposals and Success Rates* in Programmes for Early Career Researchers (mean values; 2021 to 2024)



* Base: New proposals.

- **Do I need to change institutions?**

Yes, if you have worked more than one year at the host institution (fellowship).

Yes, if there is no special justification to stay (position).



- **Am I in the early postdoc career phase?**

Consult the DFG contact persons responsible for your subject area. Indicators: You have already independently managed a research project or you have already managed scientific staff.

- **How long does it take to receive a decision?**

6-7 months on average.

- **Which subject area should I submit my application to if I want to carry out an interdisciplinary project?**

Submit your application to the office that you believe covers the largest part of your project.



From Submission to Decision



Tips

- Necessary info can be found on the DFG website
- Carefully read and follow the guidelines and proposal instructions
- Decide on the proposal **language**: English or German
- Start with **smaller** projects
- Put yourself in the **reviewers' shoes**
 - Consult the "General Guidelines for the Written Review" for reviewers
 - Write the proposal in a self-explanatory manner
- Seek **honest criticism** from colleagues
- Plan on a **feasible timeline**
- **Communicate openly with the DFG Head Office**, i.e. if a conflict of interest or competitive scenario exists

Doubts about the scientific contribution

Open questions regarding the work plan

Main aspects of research question already answered

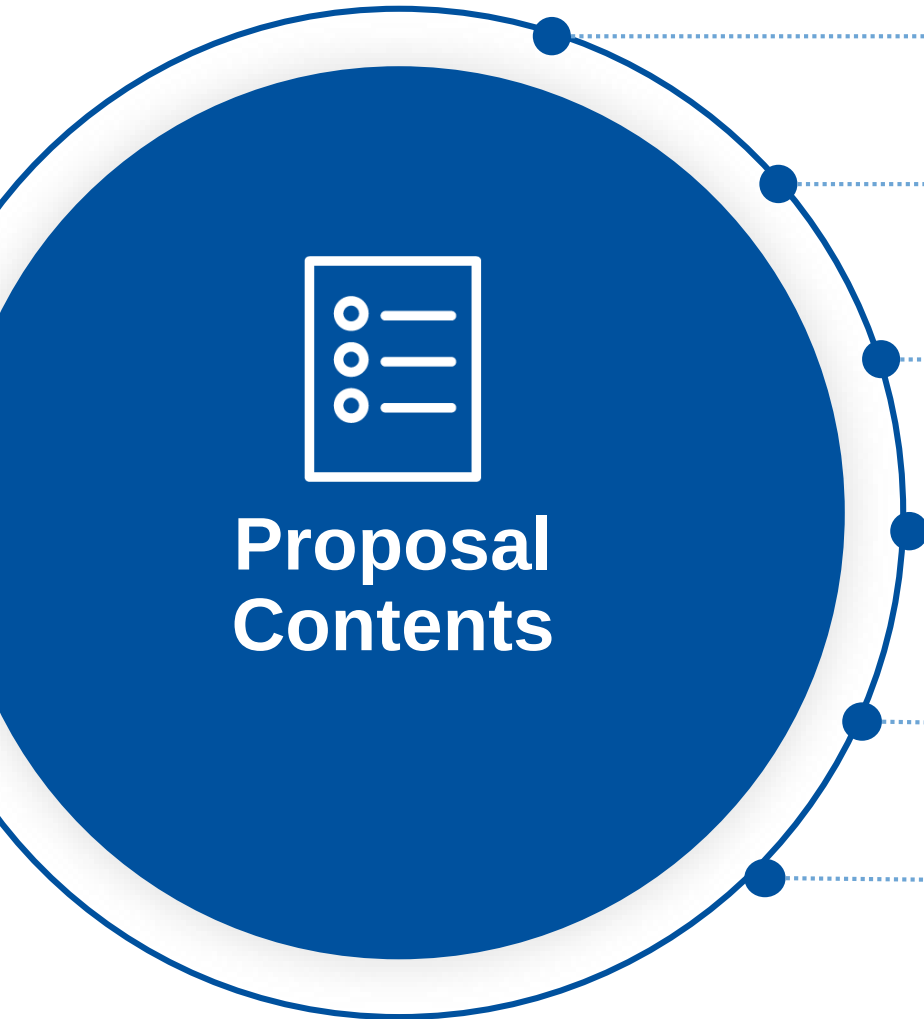
Concerns regarding the feasibility of the planned project

Doubts about the applicant's expertise



Doubts about the suitability of the research methods to achieve the project goals





What is the knowledge gap you would like to fill?

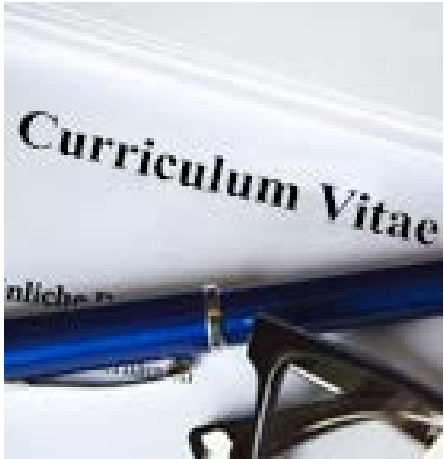
Why are the expected results novel and relevant?

What's your concrete, realistic and feasible plan to answer your research questions?

How are you going to manage setbacks / what's your plan b?

Why are you the right person to successfully run this project?

Why is the host institution ideal for your project?



Use the DFG CV template

www.dfg.de/formulare/53_200_elan/53_200_en_elan.rtf



Mention time away from research

Include prizes, fellowships and awards



List up to ten peer-reviewed publications



Include further publications, results, activities within and outside the research system

Questions? Ask for help



On Eligibility

procedures-researchcareers@dfg.de

On General Topics

info-researchcareers@dfg.de

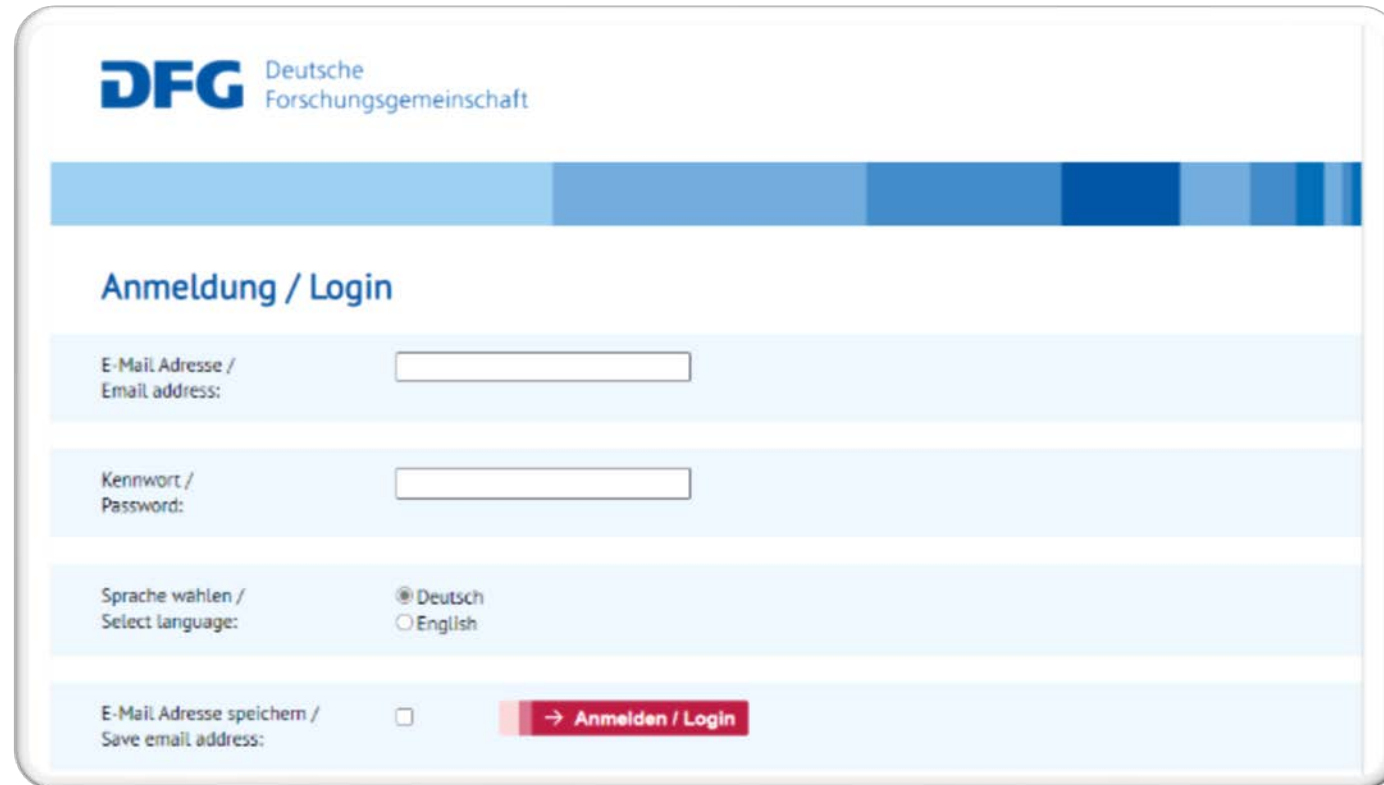
On Equity & Diversity

chancengleichheit@dfg.de

With a Subject-Specific Focus

<https://www.dfg.de/en/about-us/head-office/programme-contacts>

Submitting your proposal via *elan*



The screenshot shows the login interface of the DFG (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft) elan system. The header features the DFG logo and the text 'Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft'. Below this is a blue decorative bar. The main heading is 'Anmeldung / Login'. The form consists of four sections: 1. 'E-Mail Adresse / Email address:' with a text input field. 2. 'Kennwort / Password:' with a text input field. 3. 'Sprache wählen / Select language:' with two radio buttons, 'Deutsch' (selected) and 'English'. 4. 'E-Mail Adresse speichern / Save email address:' with a checkbox. To the right of the checkbox is a red button labeled '→ Anmelden / Login'.

DFG Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft

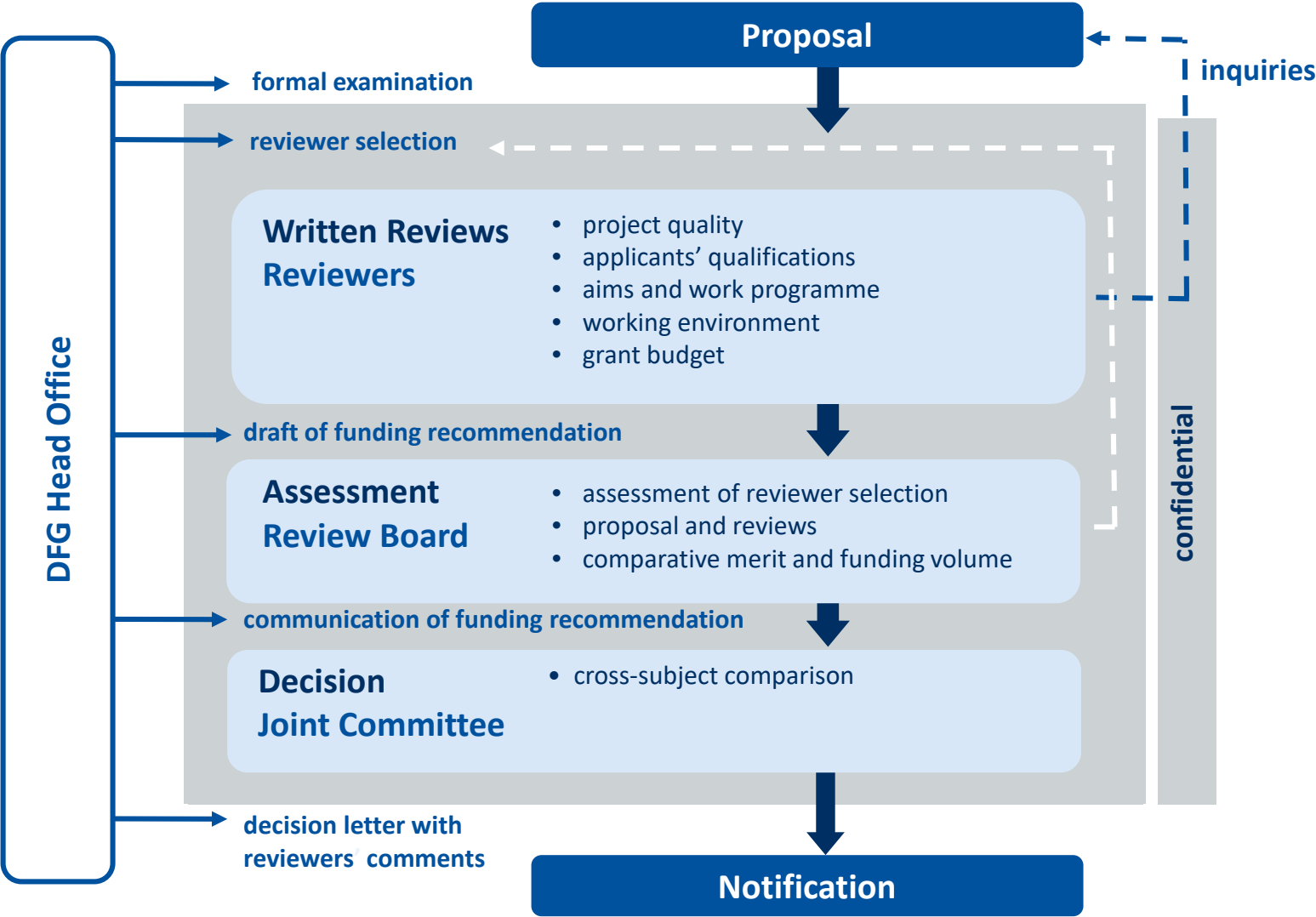
Anmeldung / Login

E-Mail Adresse /
Email address:

Kennwort /
Password:

Sprache wählen /
Select language: ☒ Deutsch
☐ English

E-Mail Adresse speichern /
Save email address: ☐





Emmy Noether Programme:
www.dfg.de/en/emmy-noether

Orientation for early-career researchers:
www.dfg.de/research_careers

Proposal Submission – A How-To Guide:
www.dfg.de/en/research_funding/individual_grants_programmes

GEPRIS – database with all DFG-funded projects:
gepris.dfg.de/en

Profiles of 25,000 German research institutes:
www.gerit.org

DFG Deutsche
Forschungsgemeinschaft



www.dfg.de



Bluesky | @dfg.de

Mastodon | @dfg_public

Instagram | dfg__public

Youtube | @DFGbewegt



LinkedIn | Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft
(DFG) – German Research Foundation



Deutsche
Forschungsgemeinschaft
German Research Foundation



**Your grant.
Your research.
Your career.**

Webinar

DFG-Förderung für Clinician Scientists

06.11.2025, 16:00-17:45

*Informieren Sie sich aus erster Hand
& klären Sie Ihre Fragen mit uns!*



Förderprogramme



Tipps zur Antragstellung



Begutachtungsprozess



Registrierung



Vortragende: Dr. Sabine Gries (DFG), Dr. Laura Stappert (DFG),
Prof. Dr. med. Anette Melk (DFG-Fachkollegiatin)