

Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space

Announcement

Regulations governing the German-African Innovation Incentive Award

of 21 April 2026

Courtesy translation - The legally binding version is the funding announcement in German published in the Bundesanzeiger (Federal Gazette).

1 Funding aim, purpose and legal basis

1.1 Aim of funding

Cooperation between German institutions and African partners in research and innovation is becoming increasingly strategically important. The Innovation Agenda of the African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU) emphasises that technological and social innovations are crucial drivers for the development of modern knowledge societies in African countries. Increased transfer of research results into practical application and the creation of favourable framework conditions for entrepreneurial initiatives provide the basis for sustainable employment and participatory economic development.

As part of the German High-Tech Agenda (Hightech Agenda Deutschland), this funding measure aims to accelerate the transfer of knowledge and technology to German and African business and society (Lever / Hebel 1) At the same time, international cooperation in the field of research and innovation will be strengthened and aligned with the strategic priorities of the German High-Tech Agenda (Lever / Hebel 6).

The Federal Government's Africa Policy Guidelines 2025 also emphasise the importance of more intensive cooperation with African partners in the fields of innovation, technology and science, which also stands for the promotion of excellence in line with German research and science policy. In this context, the German-African Innovation Incentive Award aims to strengthen innovative research in Africa and support African researchers in translating their scientific findings into practical, innovative solutions. These should not only benefit people in Africa, but also in Germany and worldwide. This is based on a concept of innovation that encompasses not only technological but also social innovations and includes society as a central stakeholder.

The Award enables researchers at German institutions to collaborate with African partners. At the level of the cooperating institutions, added value is created through new areas of application and an improved knowledge base.

In addition, the funding measure gives the researchers and the funded German-African cooperation projects particular visibility through a planned Award ceremony. Up to six Award winners will be honoured, provided a relevant number of eligible applications are submitted.

1.2 Funding purpose

The Award honours African researchers for outstanding research achievements with high application potential. Together with their German cooperation partners, they receive funding for the realisation of a German-African cooperation project as well as accompanying transfer qualification measures.

It is intended that the funded cooperation project will use the available research results to develop application-based solutions, enhance product-oriented utilization and promote structure-building initiatives. The funded cooperation project thus forms a bridge between research and utilisation or application and makes concrete contributions to the German High-Tech Agenda. By promoting international networking and cooperation between German and African researchers, the aim is to lay the foundations for the development of a sustainable innovation structure (e.g. start-up, incubator, research-based small business) or to provide a clear perspective for planning and establishing such a structure. This is intended to increase the regional socio-economic value added of the project results, strengthen local and regional innovation capacities, and promote international technology partnerships.

Furthermore, activities for science communication are to be implemented.

The Award will take the form of a grant paid for implementing a German-African cooperation project and is thus to be used for this specific purpose (see section 5). Supplementary to this, African Award winners will be provided with individual qualification opportunities that support the transfer of their research results. These will be adapted to their individual needs and take the form of advice, training and networking measures during the project period and beyond. German cooperation partners will be involved in the measures and learn about new applications for (part of) their research results in Africa.

Accompanying measures will include, for example:

- Individual advice and coaching to acquire methodical and transfer skills,
- Supporting analyses regarding relevant potential for value creation and, where applicable, tapping into new markets,
- Support in region- and target group-specific communication of the results to potential users and/or partners in the African target regions,
- If applicable, support in business plan development, for example to prepare the establishment of a spin-off company or start-up,
- Identification of opportunities for follow-up funding, for example from European initiatives.

The results from the funded project may only be used in the Federal Republic of Germany or the European Economic Area (EEA) and in Switzerland as well as in the countries of the AU.

1.3 Legal basis

The Federal Government will award grants in accordance with these funding regulations, Sections 23 and 44 of the Federal Budget Code (BHO) and the administrative regulations adopted thereunder as well as the BMFTR's regulations governing applications for expenditure-based grants (AZA/AZAP/AZV) and/or applications by commercial companies for cost-based grants (AZK). There is no legal entitlement to a grant. The granting authority will decide freely after due assessment of the circumstances within the framework of the budget funds available.

2 Object of funding

The Innovation Incentive Award will be awarded to researchers in African countries and their partners in Germany for proven outstanding research with the potential for application in combination with a utilization or commercialization plan. The plan should already provide perspectives for the lasting consolidation of cooperation between the partners and, if possible, for medium and long-term development of structures at the location in Africa.

The Award will take the form of project funding combined with opportunities for transfer qualification as well as sector-specific regional counselling and networking with industry and commercialization partners in the African target regions. The aim is to support the transfer of convincing research results already available into utilization-oriented solutions, product-oriented commercialization and structure-building initiatives. Funding can be provided for joint research and development projects in combination with commercialization activities. Projects dealing exclusively with commercialization activities will not be funded.

The Award is oriented towards the key technologies and selected strategic research fields of the German High-Tech Agenda, in which technology-driven innovations are sought, and also considers the priorities of the AU-EU Innovation Agenda. Funding will be provided for collaborative projects that, in accordance with the funding purpose described above, address one or more of the following priority areas through international cooperation:

- Applied research in the field of artificial intelligence,
- Aerospace research (in particular Earth observation, satellite communication, propulsion systems, sustainable mobility solutions),
- Quantum technology (in particular quantum sensor technology, quantum communication, and their industrial and medical applications),
- Health research (in particular health technologies and data-driven health research),
- Biotechnology (in particular for application in industry and medicine)
- Climate-neutral energy production and mobility,
- Marine, climate, and sustainability research (especially on circular economy as well as water and wastewater technologies).

The project plan is expected to include joint work phases in the African and German partner countries.

The success of the individual funded activities will be measured by looking, for example, at their contribution to

- Increasing African and German project partners' know-how about the respective thematic areas and/or their further development,
- International networking with stakeholders in politics, business or society,
- Support for early-career researchers in both countries.

Applicants are advised that they alone are responsible for complying with all valid and applicable export control regulations. Any authorisation requirements and export control checks are the responsibility of the applicants in consultation with the export control offices of their respective institutions.

Rules on research security in accordance with the G7 agreement "G7 Common Values and Principles on Research Security and Research Integrity" must be observed, and corresponding agreements must be concluded, continuously adapted and documented.

3 Funding recipients

Applications may be submitted by universities, non-university research institutions and other institutions that contribute to research and whose projects fall within the scope of non-economic activities.

Applicants are required to have an entity in Germany serving the non-commercial activity of the funding recipient (universities, non-university research institutions and other institutions contributing to research) at the time of payment of the grant.

Research institutions that receive basic funding from the Federal Government and/or state (*Länder*) governments can receive project funding for their additional project-related expenses or costs in addition to their institutional funding if they explicitly describe the relationship between the project applied for and the basic-funded activities in the funding application or clearly differentiate between the two.

Concerning the conditions for when state aid is or is not deemed to be involved and the extent to which funding can be provided without constituting aid, please consult the State aid framework for research and development and innovation (RDI framework).¹

Under these funding regulations, the recipient of funding will be allowed to transfer part of the grant to another recipient (secondary recipient) in accordance with No. 12 of the administrative regulations pertaining to Section 44 of the Federal Budget Code (BHO). In accordance with No. 13a.2 of the administrative regulations pertaining to Section 44 of the Federal Budget Code (BHO), funding recipients are not permitted to transfer a grant that is calculated on the basis of eligible project-related costs.

4 Special prerequisites for funding

The formal prerequisite for an award is evidence of the research undertaken (see 7.2.1, in particular the research report) and submission of a plan for its further development including a project outline and a financial plan for using the award money. Candidates can participate in the selection procedure either by way of application or by way of nomination (see 7.2.1).

The project outline must be submitted by the German applicant institution in cooperation with at least one research institution based in an African country.

Further partners may participate in the research project if this benefits the project and if these partners contribute their own funds.

The partners in a collaborative project will set out the terms of cooperation in a written agreement. The German and African partners will conclude a contract for the transfer of a grant. Before a funding decision on a collaborative project is taken, the cooperation partners must prove that they have reached a basic consensus on further criteria stipulated by the BMFTR (cf. BMFTR form No. 0110).²

All funding recipients, including research institutions within the meaning of Article 2 (83) GBER, must ensure that companies do not receive any form of indirect aid. The provisions of No. 2.2 of the RDI Framework of the European Union must be observed.

¹ Commission Communication (2022/C 414/01) of 28 October 2022 (OJ C 414 of 28 October 2022, p. 1 ff.).

² https://foerderportal.bund.de/easy/easy_index.php?auswahl=easy_formulare, Bereich BMFTR Allgemeine Vordrucke und Vorlagen für Berichte.

5 Type, scope and rates of funding

Funding will be awarded in the form of non-repayable project grants usually amounting to up to EUR 150,000 and for a period of up to 24 months. The measures for transfer qualification as well as sector-specific regional counselling and networking mentioned in addition to project funding in section 2 above are not part of project funding and will be offered as an extra.

The basis for calculating the grants for universities, research and science institutions and similar establishments which do not fall into the category of economic activities is the eligible project-related expenditure (in the case of the Helmholtz centres – HZ – and Fraunhofer – FhG – eligible project-related costs), which can be covered up to 100% in individual cases, taking into account state aid legislation.

In the case of non-commercial research projects at universities and teaching hospitals, a flat-rate grant amounting to 20% of total expenditure will be awarded in addition to the BMFTR-funded eligible expenditure of usually up to EUR 150,000 (which means that the maximum funding amount may be higher than the usual EUR 150,000 depending on the project flat rate).

The award money will be paid to the German partner institution in the form of a grant. As participant in the project, the German institution declares its willingness to administer the money awarded and forward the envisaged funds to the African recipients. The foreign partners will conclude a contract with the German project coordinator concerning the transfer of their grants in accordance with No. 12 of the administrative regulations pertaining to Section 44 of the Federal Budget Code (BHO). At least 50% of the grant – excluding the flat rate per project – will be for use by the African partners. The use of funds by the German partners must verifiably support the utilization plan (problem solving, commercial and/or societal use or development of structures at the location in Africa).

Eligible expenditure/costs are governed by the BMFTR's regulations governing applications for expenditure-based grants (AZA/AZAP/AZV) and/or cost-based grants (AZK) of commercial companies.

The following terms and conditions apply for

Travel expenses

Funding can cover project-related expenditure/costs of travel and stays by German and foreign researchers and experts (flight tickets: economy class). Visits to third countries for the purpose of establishing and expanding bilateral and multilateral networks (in particular in South-South cooperation) to transfer the innovative solutions to further locations are also eligible for funding in well-founded individual cases. Conference fees (in Germany or in Africa) can be funded in duly substantiated cases. Stays of the African project partners in Germany will be funded at a fixed rate of EUR 104 per day or EUR 2,300 per month and EUR 77 for individual days in the subsequent month. The day of arrival and day of departure are counted together as one day. This fixed rate is understood to include health insurance and, if applicable, other types of insurance, which must be paid by the African partners themselves.

No funding will be provided to cover any costs of the participating institutions' normal basic equipment.

Expenditure/costs which serve to provide the general public with access to the planned research process and/or its results during the funding period and to enter into a dialogue with society are eligible for funding. Science communication is the dialogue-oriented transmission of generally

understandable information about scientific research to target groups outside the scientific community.³

Carbon compensation payments for official travel can be recognized as eligible expenses or costs in accordance with the regulations governing applications for expenditure-based grants (AZA/AZAP/AZAV) and/or cost-based grants (AZK) of commercial companies.

6 Other terms and conditions

Notification of award for grants on an expenditure basis will include the *Nebenbestimmungen für Zuwendungen auf Ausgabenbasis des Bundesministeriums für Bildung und Forschung zur Projektförderung* (NABF) (Auxiliary Terms and Conditions for Funds Provided by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research for the Promotion of Projects on an Expenditure Basis).

The *Nebenbestimmungen für Zuwendungen auf Kostenbasis des Bundesministeriums für Bildung und Forschung an gewerbliche Unternehmen für Forschungs- und Entwicklungsvorhaben* (NKBF 2017) (Auxiliary Terms and Conditions for Funds Provided by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research to Commercial Companies for Research and Development Projects on a Cost Basis) will form part of the notification of award for grants on a cost basis.

The financial processing of the funded projects must be carried out via profi-Online.

For the purpose of conducting progress reviews within the meaning of administrative regulation 11a pertaining to Section 44 of the Federal Budget Code (BHO), funding recipients are required to provide the BMFTR or reviewing institutions with the data necessary for the progress review without delay. The information will be used exclusively for the purposes of accompanying research and, if applicable, subsequent evaluation; it will be treated confidentially and published in anonymized form, making it impossible to trace it back to individual persons or organizations.

The BMFTR supports the compatibility of family and further scientific qualification in BMFTR projects. Changes in BMFTR-funded projects at universities or institutionally funded research institutions that are sensible and necessary due to family-related absences of scientists in early career phases are granted with little administrative effort. In particular, extensions of the project duration and, if necessary, additional funding for the catch-up periods corresponding to family-related absences can be considered. A corresponding, briefly justified written application (via e-mail) from the project management to the responsible department or project management organization is sufficient. The prerequisite for such a change to the project is that the early career researcher makes a contribution to achieving the project objective.

Funding recipients are expected to ensure open electronic access if they publish the results of the research project in a scientific journal. This can be done through publication in an electronic journal which is accessible to the public free of charge. If the results are not initially published in a journal which is electronically accessible to the public free of charge, they must be made publicly available free of charge by electronic means, following a suitable embargo period where appropriate (secondary publication). Embargo periods for secondary publication must not exceed 12 months. The BMFTR expressly welcomes secondary open access publication of scientific monographs resulting from the project.

Funding recipients are required to design and describe suitable measures for science communication in the context of their research process and research results.

³ See also the BMFTR's FAQ on science communication.

The partners in a collaborative project are expected to develop a joint strategy for science communication.

The application for funding must confirm the existence of a research data management plan that describes the life cycle of the data collected in the project. Whenever possible, grant recipients should make the data collected as part of the project, including information on the instruments used, methods, data anonymisation and documentation, available to a suitable institution, for example a relevant research data repository or research data centre, in a reusable form after initial use, for example in the form of a scientific publication, in order to enable long-term data storage for replication and, if necessary, secondary analyses by other researchers in line with good scientific practice. Repositories should fulfil current standards for data publications (FAIR Data principles) and support the description of data through metadata and vocabularies and assign persistent identifiers (e.g. DOI, EPIC handle, ARK, URN). The data is archived and documented in the repositories or research data centres and, if necessary, made available to the scientific community on request.

7 Procedure

7.1 Involvement of a project management organization, application documents, other documents and use of the electronic application system

The BMFTR has currently entrusted the following project management organization with implementing the funding measure:

DLR Projektträger
European and International Cooperation
Heinrich-Konen-Straße 1
53227 Bonn

Contacts:

Research issues:

Lasse Nordmann
Phone: 0228 / 3821 2798
Email: Lasse.Nordmann@dlr.de

Administrative issues:

Melanie Grampp
Phone: 0228 / 3821 1932
Email: Melanie.Grampp@dlr.de

Any changes will be announced in the *Bundesanzeiger* (Federal Gazette) or in another suitable form.

Applicants are recommended to contact the project management organization for advice on applications. The organization will provide further information and details.

Application forms, guidelines, leaflets, information and auxiliary terms and conditions are available online at

https://foerderportal.bund.de/easy/easy_index.php?auswahl=formularschrank_foerderportal&formularschrank=bmftr or can be obtained directly from the above-mentioned project management organization.

The "easy-Online" electronic application system must be used for drafting project outlines and formal proposals (<https://foerderportal.bund.de/easyonline>). It is possible to submit the application in electronic form via this portal using the TAN procedure or with a qualified electronic signature. In addition, it is still possible to submit an application in paper form.

7.2 Two-phase application procedure

The application procedure consists of two phases.

7.2.1 Submission and selection of project outlines

There are two ways for candidates to participate in the selection procedure:

a) Nomination

A representative of a German university/research institution or a company proposes a researcher at an African institution for the Award. In making the nomination, the German institution declares its readiness to collaborate with the African partners in a joint project. A project plan is submitted which has been developed and signed by both sides. Only one researcher at an African institution per project can be nominated for the award and this researcher must subsequently take over the management of the project on the African side.

b) Application

African candidates submit their own applications for the Award and include a German cooperation partner eligible for funding under section 3 above in the joint project which is to follow. A project plan is submitted by the German applicant institution which has been developed and signed by both sides. Only one candidate from an African organisation per project can apply for the sponsorship award and this candidate must subsequently take over the management of the project on the African side.

The BMFTR expressly welcomes nominations and applications of women.

African candidate's centre of life and work must be in a country of the AU.

In the first phase of the procedure, documentation must be submitted to the project management organization by 30 June 2026 which includes the following elements:

- An informal cover letter with the nomination or application for the Award,
- A short research report on previous research with which candidates wish to qualify for the Award,
- CV and list of publications of the German applicant and the African candidate,
- A project outline for the planned follow-up project.

The cover letter, research report, CVs, publication lists and project outline must be submitted in English in electronic form using the "easy-Online" outline tool (https://foerderportal.bund.de/easyonline/reflink.jsf?m=IB-AFRIKA&b=IB_GAIIA_2026&t=SKI).

In the case of collaborative projects, the documentation must be submitted in consultation with the intended collaborative coordinator.

The deadline for submission is not a cut-off deadline. However, it may not be possible to consider project outlines received after the above date.

The research report should not exceed four pages. It must provide information about the

- a) Content of the completed project and the research delivered,
- b) Role of the proposed person in the research activities,
- c) Team and environment of the delivered work, including institutional links, partnerships achieved or sought, budget framework,
- d) Project duration and time frame of the research undertaken,
- e) Potential for utilization of the research results, any hurdles to and desiderata for further utilization-oriented research.

The project outline should not exceed ten pages. The outline must describe the following aspects of the project:

- Information about the African award winner and the German partner who is to receive the grant as well as about further German and foreign project partners as appropriate,
- A meaningful summary (aims, research priorities, connection to previous research including reference to the research report),
- Scientific framework of the project:
 - a) Planned activities for implementing the goals of the funding measure mentioned in section 1 above,
 - b) Description of the scientific objective of the project,
 - c) Information about the current state of science and technology,
- International cooperation within the project:
 - a) Added value of the international cooperation,
 - b) Contributions of the international partners including information about work-sharing and planned work periods in the respective partner countries,
 - c) Experience of the participating partners in international cooperation, previous collaborations,
- Sustainability of the measure/utilization plan:
 - a) Expected scientific results in line with the "G7 Common Values and Principles on Research Security and Research Integrity",
 - b) Possibilities for commercialization and/or societal use of the results, contributions to the potential development of structures,
 - c) Consolidation of the cooperation with the partners beyond the project funding period, possible plans for cooperation in follow-up projects,
 - d) Plans for expanding cooperation to other institutions and networks,
 - e) Transfer of research results into teaching/ support for early-career researchers,
 - f) Description of the planned steps of the cooperation project,
 - g) Presentation of the planned measures for involving experts and the general public,
 - h) Provisional estimate of expenditure/costs (in euros).

The project outlines received will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria:

- Fulfilment of the formal prerequisites for funding,
- Compliance with the funding aims of the call (see section 1 above) and the object of funding stated in section 2,
- Scientific criteria:
 - a) Scientific quality and originality of the project,
 - b) Relevance of the topic to BMFTR programmes,
 - c) Expertise of the applicant and the German and international partners involved,
 - d) Plausibility of developing previous research further in the new, transfer-oriented project,
 - e) Scientific benefits and prospects for utilization of the expected results (long-term

- innovation goals) in compliance with research security as defined in the "G7 Common Values and Principles on Research Security and Research Integrity",
- f) Relevance of utilization to societal needs and contribution to local economic and social development,
 - g) Sustainability of the impact, including the potential for innovation-oriented development of structures (e.g. prior to business start-ups),
 - Criteria concerning international cooperation:
 - a) Intensification of existing German-African cooperative relations including prospective continuation beyond the funding period,
 - b) Experience of the applicant with international cooperation,
 - c) Consolidation of bilateral/international partnerships,
 - d) Quality of the cooperation and added value for the partner institutions,
 - e) Further development of scientific capacity,
 - f) Support for early-career researchers,
 - g) Description of the planned measures for involving experts and the general public,
 - Plausibility and feasibility of the project (financing; milestones; time frame).

A high-ranking jury will select project outlines suitable for funding on the basis of the above criteria and evaluation. This jury is composed of African and German experts from the fields of research and innovation. Applicants will be informed in writing of the result of the selection.

The project outline and any other documents submitted in this phase of the procedure will not be returned.

7.2.2 Submission of formal proposals and decision-making procedure

In the second phase of the procedure, the applicants whose project outlines have been given a positive evaluation will be invited to submit complete formal proposals agreed with the African partners. When several German partners are involved (collaborative project), the formal proposals of the individual partners must be submitted in consultation with the envisaged coordinator. It is imperative that formal proposals include a (sub)project description and a utilization plan in German. Formal proposals must provide details about the content presented in the outline and must in addition include the following:

- A detailed (sub)project description,
- A detailed work plan and time schedule:
 - a) Feasibility of the work plan,
 - b) Plausibility of the time schedule,
- Detailed information about the financing of the project:
 - a) Appropriateness and necessity of the requested funding,
 - b) Guarantee of overall financing during the entire project period.

The work and financing plans will be evaluated in accordance with the criteria listed under 7.2.1.

The formal proposals must observe and fulfil any thematic or funding requirements and/or the evaluators' recommendations for the implementation of the project.

After final consideration of the application, a funding decision will be taken on the basis of the above criteria and evaluation.

The "easy-Online" electronic application system must be used for drafting formal proposals (<https://foerderportal.bund.de/easyonline/>). It is possible to submit the application in electronic form via this portal using the TAN procedure or with a qualified electronic signature. In addition, it is still possible to submit applications in paper form.

Guidelines, information for applicants and the auxiliary terms and conditions for the award of grants are available at

https://foerderportal.bund.de/easy/easy_index.php?auswahl=formularschrank_foerderportal&formularschrank=bmfr.

A claim to funding cannot be derived from the submission of a formal proposal.

7.3 Relevant regulations

The approval and payment of and accounting for the funds as well as the proof and examination of the proper use and, if necessary, the revocation of the award and the reclaiming of the funds awarded are governed by Sections 48 to 49a of the Administrative Procedure Act (VwVfG), Sections 23 and 44 of the Federal Budget Code (BHO) and the related general administrative regulations, unless the present funding regulations allow deviation from the general administrative regulations. The *Bundesrechnungshof* (Germany's Supreme Audit Institution) is entitled to carry out audits in accordance with Section 91 of the BHO.

8 Validity

These funding regulations will enter into force on the day of its publication in the Federal Gazette (*Bundesanzeiger*) and are valid until the end of 31 December 2031.

Bonn, 21 April 2026

Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space

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