Deutsche Stiftung Friedensforschung

german foundation for peace research

DSF

Assessment of Research Projects

Dear reviewer,

The board and the office of the German Foundation for Peace Research (DSF) thank you for agreeing to support the funding of research projects with an expert opinion. To make your work easier, we have put together the following information:

I. Framework Conditions of the Reviewing Process

Funding Area 1 is available for the application of funding for original research projects addressing relevant topics and research perspectives for peace and conflict research. DSF offers two formats in this funding area:

- **Profile project** with a standard duration of 30 months and a funding volume of up to €150,000

- **Pilot project** with a standard duration of 12 months and a funding volume of up to €50,000

There are set deadlines for requesting funding for research projects (2nd May and 1st November).

Basis for the application is our Funding Concept „Research Innovation // Network Formation // Knowledge Transfer - Bringing new impetus to peace and conflict research" from October 2020. This defines the objectives of the funding, the funding areas and formats as well as the funding criteria of the DSF. The foundation provides guidelines for information on the design of project for applications.

All research projects are subject to peer review. For this purpose, the foundation usually issues two external reports. In the event of strongly deviating funding recommendations, the foundation obtains a third assessment.

The office checks the applications for formal criteria as well as for the coherence and completeness of the documents before they are sent to the reviewers.

II.   Evaluation Standards

In the interest of a fair assessment based on evaluation criteria, the foundation's funding criteria as set out in the funding concept must be taken into account when preparing the report. They are subdivided into **four core criteria**, the positive evaluation of which is essential for acceptance into funding,

- **Scientific relevance |** Relevance to peace and conflict research, originality and coherence of the research question, positioning in the current state of research, potential for new scientific findings, and compatibility with other strands of scientific research.

- **Quality of the research design |** Coherence of the theoretical and methodological foundation of the research concept, appropriateness of the research methods and techniques chosen, suitability of comparison and validation methods, feasibility of the work plan and schedule, publication concept, and plausibility of budget planning.

- **Specialist qualifications of the applicant / project team |** Thematic and methodological expertise, research experience and relevant groundwork (depending on stage of career), international networking and language skills.

- **Potential for knowledge transfer in politics and society |** Significance for current peace and security policy issues, generation of knowledge for action and orientation, identification of key target groups for knowledge transfer, ideas for transfer formats and the accompanying utilisation of results (digital, print, etc.).

as well as the **additional criteria** refer to other fundamental funding objectives. Consideration of these criteria has an impact on the overall assessment of the project:

- **Promotion of early career researchers |** Involvement of early career researchers, project-related opportunities for qualification and networking, and participation in knowledge transfer

- **Collaborative research projects |** Project-related national and international research collaboration, cooperation with local scientific institutions in the region under investigation, and the establishment and development of research networks

- **Interdisciplinary orientation |** Tackling of the research topic from different disciplinary perspectives, development of interdisciplinary research cooperation, and linking of the project to interdisciplinary research contexts.

- **Diversity |** Consideration of diversity issues, inclusion of theoretical-methodological concepts of diversity research

In addition to the funding criteria, the report should also include an assessment of the

- Proportionality of the requested funds.

Suggestions for optimization and savings are expressly desired.

When assessing pilot projects, please note that these projects are more exploratory in nature. This should be adequately taken into account in the assessment criteria.

III.   Extent and Deadlines

In the interest of processing the applications as quickly as possible, we ask you to submit the report within four weeks, provided that no other agreement has been made with the office. The length of the expert opinion is usually three to five pages for profile projects and two to three pages for pilot studies. The level of detail of the statement depends on the specifics of the project in question.

If it is not possible for you to prepare the report within the stipulated period, we ask for immediate feedback so that the office can make an appropriate decision. If you are not able to prepare the report for reasons of time or content, we would be grateful for an immediate notification to the office.

The same also applies in the event of bias or a conflict of interests.

IV.   Composition of the Review

Your report is an important decision-making aid for the foundation's board of directors. The assessment of the application should be justified in a comprehensible manner and, if necessary, contain references to the application text. For the decision-making process, it is imperative that the report contains a clear recommendation derived from the evaluation of the application,

- whether the foundation should support or reject the project and
- which conditions or requirements should be linked to funding.

The report should also point out the strengths and weaknesses of an application for project funding and weigh them up against each other. The foundation regards any suggestions and criticisms regarding the research concept that may be included in the reports as an important contribution to improving the quality of the submitted projects.

The option of re-qualification during the ongoing process is only available for profile projects, but not for pilot projects. Further qualification is only possible if the need for improvement and explanation does not affect the central components of the research design. Fundamental criticisms of the research concept usually lead to a rejection of an application.

The recommendations of the expert reports to the foundation can be based on the following stages when the foundation board passes resolutions on applications for project funding:

- Admission to funding without restrictions | The research project is included directly in the funding.

- **Approval with conditions |** Before the funding is released, the foundation requires a written statement on the points of criticism and suggestions in the reports.

- **Post-qualification with final assessment |** The foundation demands a re-qualification of the application according to the criticisms of the expert opinion. The applicant's written statement is presented to the expert reviewers for a final assessment. This only applies to profile projects.

- **Rejection |** Funding of the application is rejected. There is the fundamental possibility of resubmitting the research project once in a revised version as a new application.

To make our work easier, we ask you to write your report in such a way that it does not contain any references to the author.

The decision of the foundation board about the inclusion of a research project in the funding also depends on the amount of funding available and the funding priority assigned to the respective project.

V.   Confidentiality with the Proposal

The identity of the reviewers is subject to strict confidentiality. It will not be made available to applicants or to any other person outside of the board of directors and the office.

The office uses your report for the purpose of decision-making in research project funding. With the aim of making decisions more transparent, the Foundation makes the report or extracts from the report available to applicants in anonymised form only.

By sending it, we assume that you will treat application documents confidentially and will not pass them on to third parties. If you have any questions to the applicant, please contact the office.

VI.   Professional competence of the Reviewers

It would be helpful for the foundation if you provided some information about your professional competence in relation to the examined research project, separately from your expert opinion.

VII.   Review after the Completion of Funding

After completing a funded research project, the foundation will contact you again and ask for a brief statement on the results presented (final report). For this purpose, you will be provided with the application documents, the expert opinions and the final reports of the project participants.

The DSF office will be happy to answer any questions or provide information on DSF research project funding.

Osnabrück, July 2021