



Deutsche Stiftung Friedensforschung

german foundation for peace research

Assessment of Research Projects

Dear reviewer,

The board and office of the German Foundation for Peace Research (DSF) would like to thank you for your commitment to support funding in funding area 2 (networking and knowledge transfer) with an expert opinion. Please use the template we sent you to prepare your report. To make your work easier, we have put together the following information:

I. Framework Conditions of the Reviewing Process

In funding area 2: “*Networking and Knowledge Transfer*”, the foundation offers four different funding formats:

- **Research Network** | Standard term of 24 months and a funding amount of up to 25,000 thousand euros
- **International conference** | a funding amount of up to 20,000 thousand euros
- **Networking Project** | a funding amount of up to 10,000 thousand euros
- **Transfer project** | a funding amount of up to 10,000 thousand euros

In principle, co-financing is possible if the foundation has a sufficiently visible share in the funding of the project.

The application is not tied to fixed deadlines, but the project applications are usually to be submitted to the Foundation's office six months before the implementation date. In justified exceptional cases, applications with a shorter deadline will also be accepted.

The basis for the application is the funding concept [“Research Innovation // Network Building // Knowledge Transfer. Funding impulses for peace and conflict research”](#) from January 2025. This defines the objectives of the funding, the funding areas and funding formats as well as the funding criteria of the DSF. The Foundation provides guidelines for information on the design of project applications.

Applications for funding from research networks and international conferences are always subject to **peer review**. The Foundation awards for this usually an external appraisal.

Networking and transfer projects are only externally reviewed in exceptional cases.

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

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 conference design /network design** | e.g. coherence between leading questions and the methodological structure of the conference/network, selection criteria for the conference participants/the members of the network, feasibility of the work and time planning, publication concept and plausibility of the budget planning, Sufficient international participation in specialist conferences (approx. 40%), sustainable impact elements of the conferences/research networks
- **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.

III. Extent and Deadlines

In the interest of processing the applications as quickly as possible, we urge you to submit the report **within four weeks**, unless otherwise agreed with the office. For projects in funding area 2, the report is usually two to three pages long. The level of detail of the statement depends on the special features of the respective project.

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

The same 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 point out the strengths and weaknesses of an application for project funding and weigh them up against each other. The Foundation considers any suggestions and criticisms of the research design included in the reports as an important contribution to improving the quality of the projects submitted. Fundamental criticisms of the project concept always result in a rejection of the proposed project.

The recommendations of the reports to the foundation can be based on the following gradations when the foundation board decides on applications in funding area 2:

- **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.

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.

To make our work easier, we ask that you use the template we have sent you and draft your report in such a way that it contains no references to the author. Once the report is complete, please upload it as a PDF to our DSF funding portal via the personalized link we have sent you. You will receive this link separately by email.

V. Confidentiality with the Proposal

The identity of the reviewers is subject **to strict confidentiality**. It will not be made accessible to the applicants or other persons outside of the board and the office.

The office uses your report for the purpose of decision-making in project funding. With the aim of transparency in the decision-making process, the foundation makes the report or ex-cerpts from the report available to the applicants exclusively in anonymous form.

By sending it, we assume that you will treat the application documents confidentially and not pass them on to third parties.

If you have any questions for 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 research project under review separately from your expert opinion.

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

Osnabrück, März 2026