

**Federal Ministry
of Education and Research**

Announcement

**Regulations
governing the provision of funding for a
"Maria Sibylla Merian International Centre for Advanced Studies in the Humanities
and Social Sciences"
in North Africa, Jordan or Lebanon
of 19th December 2018**

1 Aim, purpose of funding, legal basis

1.1 Aim and purpose of funding

Specific issues in the humanities and social sciences can best be studied abroad. This requires extensive exchanges with local researchers, cooperation with foreign universities and non-university research institutions and longer research periods abroad. If, in addition, different disciplinary approaches are needed to address an issue, researchers from different disciplines must cooperate closely within a research group. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) is therefore using the funding format of a "Maria Sibylla Merian International Centre for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences" to enable the study of specific issues from various disciplinary perspectives within a closely cooperating group based outside Europe (for more information on the Maria Sibylla Merian Centres please click <https://www.bmbf.de/de/maria-sibylla-merian-centres-5181.html> - available in German only).

The funding for a research centre in North Africa, Jordan or Lebanon aims to strengthen scientific cooperation between Germany and one or more countries in the region. Bilateral research cooperation will be strengthened in the field of the humanities and social sciences, which will lead to stable ties between researchers in the countries involved and longer-term links between universities and non-university research institutions in Germany and similar institutions in the partner country. The Maria Sibylla Merian Centre is expected to act as a visible forum for exchanges between experts from the partner countries who will work together as partners and in an intercultural dialogue and will conduct cutting-edge research on a jointly selected priority topic which is of special relevance for Germany and the partner country and possibly also for the partner region. Bilateral exchange promotes an intercultural perspective, broadens research

horizons and thus triggers the development of new research issues, approaches and methods. Comparative approaches in particular can help to take a fresh view of things.

The Fellows Programme of the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre will form a nucleus for ambitious research involving outstanding established researchers as well as post-docs or doctoral students where appropriate. It will also improve research conditions for international early-career researchers.

Cooperation will not be limited to bilateral exchanges between researchers but it will also contribute to strengthening the international dimension of research in the participating countries and enable researchers to cooperate in international networks. Cooperation between the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre and other countries in the region is expressly welcome.

1.2 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 BMBF's regulations governing applications for expenditure-based grants (AZA) and/or 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.

Under these regulations, state aid will be granted on the basis of Article 25(2)(a-c) of Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 Declaring Certain Categories of Aid Compatible with the Internal Market in Application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty (General Block Exemption Regulation – GBER) (OJ L 187 of 26.6.2014, p. 1) in the version of the Regulation (EU) 2017/1084 of 14 June 2017 (OJ L 156/1 of 20.6.2017). Funding is provided in accordance with the Common Provisions set out in Chapter I GBER, in particular taking account of the definitions given in Article 2 of the Regulation (cf. Annex with regard to the requirements of state aid legislation applying to these funding regulations).

2 Object of funding

The BMBF intends to provide funding for a Maria Sibylla Merian Centre which will be established at a university or non-university research institution in a country in North Africa, Jordan or Lebanon. Funding will be provided for collaborative projects (see section 3).

Funding may be provided for:

- a) A preliminary phase to prepare and plan a Maria Sibylla Merian Centre: Funding for the preliminary phase covers a period of two to three years, as a rule three years.
Its purpose is to:
 - Intensify existing contacts and establish new links with researchers in the partner country
 - Negotiate with a suitable university or non-university research institution or a group of collaborating institutions in the partner country to agree the terms of participation by the partner in the collaboration and to conclude agreements with this/these cooperation partner/s
 - Facilitate negotiations and agreements with political institutions and research funding institutions in the partner country with a view to the necessary co-funding of the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre by the partner country or institutions in the partner country, and in the context of the legal and administrative framework of the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre;
 - Draft a detailed research programme and organizational strategy for the main phase of the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre together with the researchers of the cooperating university, non-university institute or various institutions in the partner country;
 - Implement initial research projects in preparation of the main phase;
 - Test the instruments of research cooperation with the partners in the partner country.
- b) A main phase: The preliminary phase will be evaluated by an external panel of international experts. If the evaluation produces a positive result, a main phase of work of the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre will be funded for a period of up to six years.
- c) A concluding phase: The main phase is also subject to external evaluation by a panel of international experts. If the evaluation of the main phase produces a positive result, the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre may receive funding for a concluding phase of a further three or four years depending on the duration of the preliminary phase (see section 5.2).

2.1 Design of the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre (including supporting services in Germany)

The Maria Sibylla Merian Centre is linked with a university or a non-university research institution in the partner country and can cooperate with other partners in the partner country within a network with defined competences. Efforts by the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre to extend such cooperation beyond its own site to cover the entire country and beyond its respective host country to other countries in the region are welcome.

The priority topic and research issues to be addressed by the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre in an interdisciplinary approach can be freely chosen by the applicants (see section 3). This means that submission of an application for the preliminary phase must be preceded by extensive exchanges with researchers (including consultations with research funding organizations) from the partner country and also, if appropriate, from the partner region. During the preliminary phase, the applicants will draft the research programme of the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre together with their foreign partners following the identification of the research partners in the partner country. The priority topic of the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre should be in the humanities and/or social sciences; areas and issues relating to the natural sciences may be included. A comparative approach to research is desirable but is not a prerequisite for funding.

The Maria Sibylla Merian Centre will be managed jointly by researchers from Germany and the partner country who have an outstanding research record. These experienced researchers will address their topic in close cooperation with a group of associated colleagues who belong to the university or non-university research institution in the country hosting the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre and, where appropriate, with colleagues from the collaborating partners in the partner country or region.

A Fellows Programme will be launched under which researchers with outstanding expertise from Germany and the partner country as well as the partner region will be invited to work at the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre; a smaller number of fellows will also be recruited worldwide. The researchers will be able to work on their individual projects under the overall research programme; they will be exempted from most teaching obligations and engage in extensive exchanges.

Apart from accommodating fellows with a record of excellent research, the Centre will also give promising post-docs the opportunity to work on innovative issues as part of a group of first-rate researchers from a specific field. In this way, the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre will ensure the involvement of early-career researchers, offering them excellent conditions for research and the prospect of subsequent integration into the German universities or non-university research institutions to be funded under this call. In addition to supporting post-docs, the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre may also set up a highly selective doctoral programme, although this is not a necessary component of the overall programme.

The university and/or non-university research institution hosting the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre will support cooperation between its own members and the researchers at the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre.

The Maria Sibylla Merian Centre should play an active part in the work of the partner institution, but also in the local context and in the context of the partner country's science system and society. The research of the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre will be supported by an Advisory Council which will contribute to quality assurance and to the identification of the research focus. The management of the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre will submit annual progress reports to the Advisory Council.

The Centre's management will decide on the use of funds, recruitment and the invitation of fellows; final decisions on the use of BMBF funds will, however, be made by the German funding recipients.

Contributions to support stronger bilateral cooperation:

The funding recipients of the collaborative project (see section 3) are expected to make a contribution to enhanced bilateral cooperation at their institution in Germany. They are particularly encouraged to make contributions that have a lasting effect on structure and profile-building processes at their institution. Such contributions may include:

- Measures to involve former Fellows and former doctoral students in an alumni network
- Establishment of a professorship (early appointment) or a junior academic staff position at the institution in Germany or suitable classification of an advertised professorship
- Contributions to placing cooperative relations on a permanent basis (including guest researcher programmes, grants for study periods abroad as part of regular study programmes, exchange programmes for doctoral students at the institution in Germany);
- Cooperation in the supervision of doctoral candidates at the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre or measures to facilitate research periods by post-docs and doctoral students at the universities and non-university research institutions in Germany.

2.2 Administrative framework of a Maria Sibylla Merian Centre

The Maria Sibylla Merian Centre will be managed by a small Team of Directors comprised of equal numbers of outstanding researchers from Germany and the partner country. At least one member of the Team of Directors from Germany and one from the partner country should work simultaneously at the site of the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre during the main phase. If several posts for German Directors must be filled, candidates from different universities or non-university research institutions should be chosen. The Directors should work on site for periods of several years, if possible; the minimum period will be one year. For this purpose, funding can be used to finance a full-time replacement at the home institution. Release from certain regular duties can be granted to any further members of the Team of Directors who serve their term working from their institution in Germany. The overall release must not exceed a full-time replacement. In order to ensure maximum managerial continuity, the Team of Directors will be assisted by a research manager (if possible a post-doc) who will serve for an uninterrupted period of at least three years.

In consultation with the Advisory Council, the Team of Directors will award between five and ten fellowships annually to renowned researchers mainly from Germany and the partner country. The fellows will receive a fellowship grant or funding will be provided for a replacement at their home institution during their period of work at the Centre. The

duration of the work periods may vary but longer fellowships (of 9 to 12 months) should be the rule to ensure continuity and strengthen working relations. Selection of the fellows should lead to a productive mix of promising post-docs and experienced researchers. In addition, it will be possible for selected post-doc fellows to spend research periods of up to three years at the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre and to receive a fellowship grant or funding will be provided for a replacement at their home institution for a period of up to three years. A maximum of three such post-doc fellows can work simultaneously at the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre. If possible, the work at the Centre of both the management and the fellows should occur during their active working lives. Care should be taken to ensure continuity if a change in management is required for reasons of age.

The work of the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre will be organized and supported by a service team of up to seven members (full-time equivalent) including the Scientific Director. Most of the members of the service team should preferably be recruited in Germany and the partner country. The services provided by the team should include the following: Support of the management in research matters and in the administration of the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre, supervision of the fellows, translations, publications and public relations work. The universities and non-university research institutions in the collaboration will apply for funding to pay for the service team members from Germany.

The partner country and/or the institutions in the partner country are expected to make a substantial contribution to financing the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre during its main and concluding phases. The contribution during the main phase will at least comprise funding to finance the release of researchers during their term as Directors at the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre, funds to pay the members of the service team from the partner country as well as funds to provide the necessary infrastructure (rooms, office equipment, information and communications technology, library and online resources, special equipment as required, services).

3 Funding recipients

The following are eligible to receive funding, provided that they fulfil the purpose and requirements of the funding: universities and non-university research institutions as well as other institutions or legal entities that have great expertise in international research administration. Applicants are required to have a plant or branch (company) or another entity to act as funding recipient (university, research institution, organization with great expertise in international research administration) in Germany at the time of payment of the grant.

Applicants are requested to form collaborations. At least one partner in each collaboration must have the necessary expertise in international research administration and for establishing and supporting or managing research groups or institutes abroad.

Cooperation between the collaboration and one or several partner institutions in North Africa, Jordan or Lebanon is the basis for funding a Maria Sibylla Merian Centre; however, foreign institutions cannot receive funding from the BMBF. Cooperation with universities and non-university research institutions in EU countries is possible but these cooperation partners cannot be financed from BMBF funds either.

Research institutions which receive basic funding from the Federal Government and/or the *Länder* can only be granted project funding on top of their institutional funding to cover additional project-related expenditure or costs under certain preconditions.

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 Commission communication concerning the Framework for State Aid for Research and Development and Innovation of 27 June 2014 (OJ C 198 of 27/06/2014 p.1 ff); in particular Section 2.

4 Special prerequisites for funding

Institutions applying for funding must prove in the project description (see section 7) that the individual institutions have carried out relevant previous research and have experience with the management of research groups or institutes, research cooperation with the relevant partner country and in the thematic fields of the planned Maria Sibylla Merian Centre as well as with interdisciplinary research projects. In addition, they must prove their expertise in research administration in international contexts as well as in establishing and supporting research structures abroad (preferably in the countries referred to in these funding regulations).

As the preliminary phase to prepare and plan a Maria Sibylla Merian Centre largely serves the establishment of structures, one collaboration partner, that is, the one with the greatest expertise in international research administration and for establishing institutes abroad, will be assigned a coordinating function: This partner will coordinate and implement the different tasks related to the establishment of structures including events and services during the preliminary phase. The research work of the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre will come into greater focus in the main and concluding phases, which will result in a considerable increase in the tasks of the other collaboration partners during these further phases.

The terms of cooperation between the partners in a collaborative project must be set out in a written cooperation agreement. Collaboration partners which are research institutions within the meaning of Article 2(83) GBER must ensure that no indirect aid flows to companies under the collaboration. The provisions of Section 2.2 of the Commission communication concerning the Community Framework for State Aid for Research and Development and Innovation (OJ C 198 of 27 June 2014, p. 1) must be

observed. 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 BMBF (cf. BMBF leaflet No. 0110).¹

It is expected that the project description submitted by the collaboration for funding of a preliminary phase has been drafted on the basis of extensive exchanges with researchers and research funding organizations from the partner country or partner region as appropriate.

Participation in an information event:

The Maria Sibylla Merian Centre is an innovative funding model which requires not only great research expertise as well as organizational and intercultural skills but also special know-how in establishing research structures abroad. It is therefore necessary to bring potential applicants (see section 3) together before application for preliminary phases and facilitate contact with research funding organizations and research institutions which have relevant expertise. The BMBF therefore invites all potential applicants to an event in Bonn

on March 25th 2019.

This event is intended to provide further information and to encourage exchanges and agreements on cooperation between potential applicants. The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation will also participate and answer questions concerning the possibilities of support.

Participation in this event is mandatory for applicants. Interested parties must register with the project management organization (see 7.1)

by March 4th 2019.

5 Type, scope and rates of funding

The funding period under this call will comprise a preliminary phase of usually three years, a main phase of up to six years and a concluding phase of usually three years (see section 2) so that funding is provided for a maximum of twelve years. Initially, funding can only be requested and provided for the preliminary phase.

Funding will be awarded in the form of project grants.

Grants for commercial companies and for projects of research institutions which fall into the category of economic activities² are calculated on the basis of the eligible project-related costs. As a rule, up to 50% can be covered by government grants, taking state aid legislation into account (see Annex) and depending on the project's relevance to

¹ https://foerderportal.bund.de/easy/easy_index.php?auswahl=easy_formulare, under BMBF > Allgemeine Vordrucke und Vorlagen für Berichte.

² For the definition of economic activity, see No. 17 of the Community framework for state aid for R&D&I.

application. The BMBF's policy requires an appropriate own contribution of at least 50% towards the eligible costs incurred.

The determination of the respective eligible costs must take account of the GBER (see Annex).

The basis for calculating the grants for higher education institutions, 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 the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft (FhG), eligible project-related costs), which can receive up to 100% coverage in individual cases, taking into account state aid legislation.

The calculation of the respective rate of funding must take account of the GBER (see Annex).

5.1 Amount and subject of funding for a preliminary phase

The preliminary phase will be funded over a period of usually three years and include overall funding of up to 1.7 million euros.

Provision of funding for a preliminary phase will enable the following, for example:

- Meetings of the German institutions working together in the collaboration and meetings of these institutions with researchers from the partner country;
- Visits abroad to discuss the legal basis and negotiate the required co-funding of the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre with institutions in the partner country;
- Drafting a research programme and an organizational strategy for the planned Maria Sibylla Merian Centre (including a career advancement programme for young researchers and supportive action by the participating universities in Germany to strengthen bilateral cooperation);
- Workshops or conferences to discuss the planned priority topic;
- Testing of instruments for research cooperation with the partner/s in the partner country in initial research projects to prepare the main phase.

5.2 Amount and subject of funding for a main and concluding phase

Funding for a main phase can be requested after external evaluation of the preliminary phase by an international panel. Applications can be submitted for BMBF funding for a main phase of up to six years worth up to 12 million euros in total, with funds being available for the management, service team, fellows, travel expenses, events, publications and contracting. The Centre's Directors from Germany will decide on the appropriate use of the project funds together with their foreign colleagues on the basis of

the research programme while taking account of the provisions of the notification of award and the relevant applicable rules and regulations. The Maria Sibylla Merian Centre may receive funding for a concluding phase of up to four years depending on the duration of the preliminary phase if the external evaluation of the main phase has produced a positive result.

6 Other terms and conditions

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 be part of the notification of award for grants on a cost basis.

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) and the *Besondere Nebenbestimmungen für den Abruf von Zuwendungen im mittelbaren Abrufverfahren im Geschäftsbereich des BMBF* (BNBest-mittelbarer Abruf-BMBF) for the drawdown of funds.

Notification of award for grants on an expenditure basis will include the *Allgemeine Nebenbestimmungen für Zuwendungen zur Projektförderung an Gebietskörperschaften und Zusammenschlüsse von Gebietskörperschaften* (ANBest-GK) (General Auxiliary Conditions for Grants awarded to Territorial Authorities and Associations of Territorial Authorities), the *Besondere Nebenbestimmungen für Zuwendungen des BMBF zur Projektförderung auf Ausgabenbasis* (BNBest-BMBF 98) (Special Auxiliary Terms and Conditions for Funds Provided by the BMBF for the Promotion of Projects on Expenditure Basis), and the *Besondere Nebenbestimmungen für den Abruf von Zuwendungen im mittelbaren Abrufverfahren im Geschäftsbereich des BMBF* (BNBest-mittelbarer Abruf-BMBF) for the drawdown of funds.

For the purpose of conducting progress reviews within the meaning of administrative regulation (VV) 11a pertaining to section 44 of the Federal Budget Code (BHO), funding recipients are required to provide the data necessary for the progress review to the BMBF or the institutions charged with such tasks without delay. The information will be used exclusively for the purposes of any supporting research and subsequent evaluation; it will be treated with confidentiality and published in anonymized form, making it impossible to trace it back to individual persons or organizations.

The application of innovative procedures for the translation of research outcomes and the diffusion of findings among the science community and the public are expressly

welcome. Applicants are furthermore expected to be prepared to cooperate beyond the project level with existing Merian Centres and other BMBF-funded projects under initiatives on related topics.

Funding recipients are expected to ensure open 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 initially published in a way which does not provide the public with free electronic access, the article must be made publicly available free of charge by electronic means following an embargo period where appropriate (secondary publication). Embargo periods for secondary publication must not exceed 12 months. The BMBF expressly welcomes secondary open access publication of scientific monographs resulting from the project.

7 Procedure

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

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

German Aerospace Center (DLR)
DLR Project Management Agency
Society, Innovation, Technology: Humanities and Social Sciences
Heinrich-Konen-Strasse 1
53227 Bonn, Germany

Phone: +49 (0)228 3821-1580 (Secretariat)

Fax: +49 (0)228 3821-1500

Web: <http://www.pt-dlr.de>

The contact person is: Dr. Ursula Bach

Phone: +49 (0)228 3821-1134

E-mail: ursula.bach@dlr.de

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

Applicants are strongly advised to contact the project management agency before submitting their applications.

Forms for funding applications, guidelines, leaflets, information and auxiliary terms and conditions are available at

https://foerderportal.bund.de/easy/easy_index.php?auswahl=easy_formulare&formulars_chrank=bmbf.

The "easy-online" electronic application system must be used for drafting funding applications (<https://foerderportal.bund.de/easyonline>).

7.2 Single-step application procedure

An application for funding is only considered complete if at least the requirements of Article 6(2) GBER (cf. Annex) are fulfilled.

Applications for funding for the collaborative project for the preliminary phase of a Maria Sibylla Merian Centre are to be sent to the project management agency in printed and in electronic form. The funding applications must be submitted in consultation with the proposed project coordinator. The funding application consists of the signed form *Zuwendungsantrag auf Ausgabenbasis* (AZA) and a joint project description. It must be submitted electronically via the Internet portal

https://foerderportal.bund.de/easyonline/reflink.jsf?m=GSW&b=M_S_MERIAN_C_NJL&t=SKI. In addition, applicants are required to submit a signed hard copy of their funding application. The deadline for the submission of applications is

July 1st 2019.

It may not be possible to consider applications received after the above date.

The project description should not have more than 25 pages (A4, 1.5 spaced). The project description must include a cover page which indicates the applicants and their institutions, the collaboration coordinator of the institutions in Germany and the title of the project, the planned duration of the preliminary phase and the requested funding for the entire collaboration. The annex of the project description should only comprise a list of the most important publications (not more than 20) of the participating researchers as well as letters of intent concerning future cooperation.

The project description must be drafted in English and structured as follows:

- Clear summary of the project (not more than one page);
- Topic, research issue (based on the international state of research), provisional research programme of the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre taking account of the interdisciplinary approach, the research methods and the relevance for activities in the partner country;
- Proposed partners for cooperation in the partner country and/or partner region;
- Basic organizational features of the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre including a provisional career advancement programme for postdocs and, and if applicable, doctoral students, the planned integration within a university/universities and non-university research institution/s in the partner country, existing and planned cooperation beyond the Centre, and the provisional bilateral programme including

- planned contributions by the participating universities and non-university research institutions in Germany as well as work sharing between the partners;
- Steps for planning, preparing and establishing the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre;
 - Previous own work (including relevant publications), experience with the management of research groups or institutes and with research cooperation with the respective partner country in thematic fields relevant for the planned Maria Sibylla Merian Centre as well as expertise in establishing and supporting research structures abroad (see section 4);
 - Work, time and financing schedule of the collaborative project (specifying potential co-funding by the partner country and/or institutions in the partner country);
 - Utilization plan.

The review and evaluation of the applications received will involve external experts and be based on the following criteria:

- Originality of the research issue and quality of the provisional research programme (regarding the empirical basis, theoretical background and methods) taking account of the interdisciplinary dimension of the research;
- Organization of the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre and the planned bilateral programme as well as its feasibility;
- Research expertise of the applicants (in terms of previous work, experience with the management of research groups or institutes and with research cooperation with the respective partner country as well as experience with interdisciplinary research projects), research expertise of the cooperation partners in the partner country and performance profile of the applicants with regard to their experience with initiating research partnerships abroad;
- Co-funding by the partner country and/or institutions in the partner country (see section 2.2);
- Structure for longer-term, successful bilateral cooperation;
- Support for early-career researchers by the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre;
- Necessity and appropriateness of requested funding.

It is planned to invite the applicants to a personal hearing by an evaluation panel. A funding decision will be taken after final consideration on the basis of the above criteria and evaluation. Applicants will be informed in writing of the result of the selection process.

Applicants have no legal claim to the return of their funding application and any other documents which they may have submitted.

7.3 Application for funding of the main phase

If the external evaluation of the preliminary phase by a panel of international experts produces a positive result, a funding application can be submitted for the main phase. Firstly, the application must include a written funding commitment by the funding providers in the partner country. Secondly, a written confirmation by the university or non-university research institution hosting the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre that it will provide the basic equipment for the Centre and organize accommodation for the fellows (see section 2.2) must also be submitted. More detailed information about the thematic and formal design and evaluation of the funding application for the main phase will be published in due time during the preliminary phase.

7.3.1 Criteria for success and evaluation of the main phase

The criteria for success refer to the following:

- Scientific output and international visibility of the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre;
- Organization of the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre;
- Enhancement of bilateral and international research cooperation in the humanities and social sciences;
- Advancement of early-career researchers;
- Long-term institutional impact of the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre;
- Impact beyond research.

The applicants must express their willingness to cooperate in the evaluation. Conferences will be held to present the results of the funding measure to the research community and the general public in a suitable manner.

7.4 Relevant regulations

The approval, payment 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 deviation is allowed from the general administrative regulations under the present funding regulations. The *Bundesrechnungshof* is entitled to carry out audits in accordance with Section 91 of the Federal Budget Code (BHO).

8 Validity

These funding regulations will be valid until the day of expiry of their legal basis for state aid, the GBER, to which a six-month adaptation period is added, that is, until 30 June 2021. If the period of the GBER is extended without relevant modification of the state aid provisions, the duration of these funding regulations will be extended accordingly, though not beyond 11 December 2033. If the GBER is not extended but instead replaced by a new GBER or if relevant amendments are made to the content of the currently applicable GBER, follow-up funding regulations will be adopted which will comply with the then applicable exemption provisions and remain effective at least until 31 December 2033.

Bonn, 19th December 2018

Federal Ministry
of Education and Research

.....
Dr. Hack

Annex: Requirements of state aid legislation

The following requirements of state aid legislation apply to these funding regulations:

1 General prerequisites for funding

The aid is only lawful if all the prerequisites of chapter 1 GBER and the prerequisites in chapter 3 applicable to the designated category of state aid are fulfilled in line with Article 3 GBER and the national courts are obliged to order the repayment of unlawful state aid in accordance with the rulings of the European courts.

In applying for funding under these funding regulations, applicants commit themselves to actively cooperate in complying with the requirements of state aid legislation. Thus, applicants must, upon application or subsequently, provide information and documentation requested by the funding provider as evidence of credit worthiness and conformity with state aid requirements. Furthermore, applicants must cooperate within any procedures of or at the European Commission and comply with all requirements of the Commission.

A prerequisite for the granting of state aid under an aid scheme exempted by the GBER is that this has an incentive effect within the meaning of Article 6 GBER. State aid is considered to have an incentive effect if the beneficiary has submitted a written application for the aid in a Member State concerned before work on the project or activity starts. The application for aid must include at least the following information: name and size of the undertaking; description of the project including its start and end dates; location of the project; the costs of the project; type of aid (e.g. grant, loan, guarantee, repayable advance payment or capital injection) and size of the public financing needed for the project.

State aid on the basis of the GBER will not be granted if there are grounds for exclusion under Article 1 (2 to 5) GBER; in particular this applies if the undertaking is subject to an outstanding recovery order following a previous Commission decision declaring an aid illegal and incompatible with the internal market or the undertaking is an “undertaking in difficulty” as defined in Article 2 (18) GBER.

European legislation requires that every individual aid exceeding EUR 500,000 must be published on a special website (cf. Article 9 GBER).

In individual cases, the funding received may be monitored by the Commission in line with Article 12 GBER.

State aid is granted under these funding regulations in the form of grants in accordance with Article 5 (1 and 2) GBER.

The GBER restricts the granting of state aid for economic activities in the following areas to the corresponding maximum amounts stated below:

- EUR 40 million per undertaking, per research and development project which mostly involves fundamental research (Article 4(1)(i)(i) GBER);
- EUR 20 million per undertaking, per research and development project which mostly involves industrial research (Article 4(1)(i)(iii) GBER);
- EUR 15 million per undertaking, per research and development project which mostly involves experimental development (Article 4(1)(i)(iii) GBER);

The rules concerning cumulation set out in Article 8 GBER must be observed when determining whether these maximum amounts ('notification thresholds') are respected. The maximum amounts may not be circumvented by artificially splitting up projects with related content. Partial approval up to the maximum amount of aid subject to notification is not permitted.

2 Scope/rates of funding; cumulation

The following provisions of the GBER apply to these funding regulations, in particular concerning eligible costs and state aid intensities. The following eligible costs and intensities set out the overall thresholds within which eligible costs and rates of funding for projects involving economic activity can be granted.

The aided part of the research project must fall completely within one or more of the following categories:

- basic research,
 - industrial research,
 - experimental development
- (cf. Article 25(2) GBER; definitions according to Article 2 (84 ff.) GBER).

For the purpose of classifying research work as basic research, industrial research, and experimental development, please refer to the relevant information in no. 75 and footnote no. 2 of the R&D&I state aid Framework.

The eligible costs of each research and development project must be allocated to the relevant research and development categories.

Eligible costs are:

- Staff costs: for researchers, technicians and other supporting staff to the extent employed on the project (Article 25(3)(a) GBER);
- Costs of instruments and equipment to the extent and for the period used for the project. Where such instruments and equipment are not used for their full life for the project, only the depreciation costs corresponding to the life of the project, as calculated on the basis of generally accepted accounting principles are considered as eligible (Article 25(3)(b) GBER);
- Costs of contractual research, knowledge and patents bought or licensed from outside sources at arm's length conditions, as well as costs of consultancy and equivalent services used exclusively for the project (Article 25(3)(d) GBER);
- Additional overheads and other operating expenses, including costs of materials, supplies and similar products, incurred directly as a result of the project (Article 25(3)(e) GBER).

The aid intensity for each beneficiary must not exceed the following rates:

- 100% of the eligible costs for fundamental research (Article 25(5)(a) GBER);
- 50% of the eligible costs for industrial research (Article 25(5)(b) GBER);
- 25% of the eligible costs for experimental development (Article 25(5)(c) GBER).

The aid intensity for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) may be increased as follows if the prerequisites stated in Article 25(6) are fulfilled:

- Small enterprises: Maximum bonus 35% (Article 25(6)(a and b))
- Maximum funding intensity for industrial research: 85%
- Maximum funding intensity for experimental development: 60%
- Medium-sized enterprises: Maximum bonus 25% (Article 25(6)(a and b))
- Maximum funding intensity for industrial research: 75%
- Maximum funding intensity for experimental development: 50%

Article 7(1) GBER requires that the eligible costs be supported by documentary evidence which must be clear, specific and contemporary.