



# The Walter Benjamin Programme

## For the early Postdoc Phase

16/05/2024

Anjana Buckow, Saskia Parobij, Ina von der Beck

Information presented on the following slides are valid on 16 May, 2024.

Please check [www.dfg.de](http://www.dfg.de) for updates and prevailing regulations.

# Topics

**1 | The DFG – About Us**

2 | The Walter Benjamin Programme

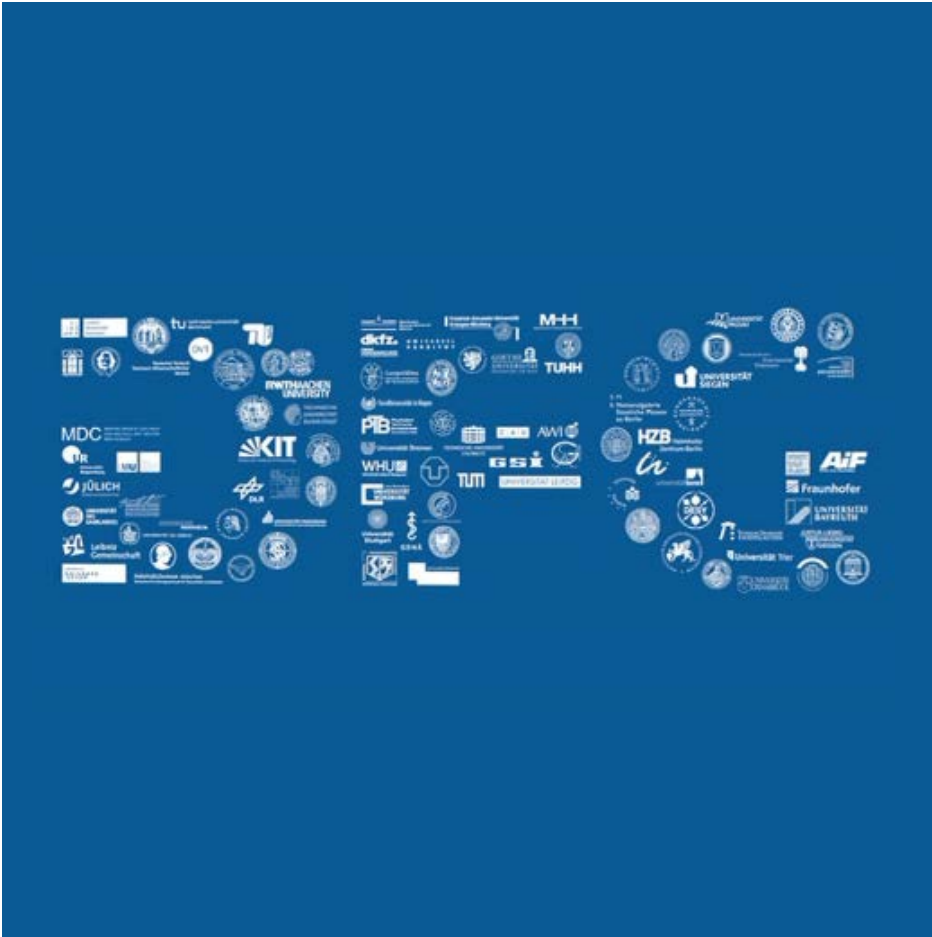
3 | Review Process and Advice

4 | Links and Resources

# The DFG – About Us

<https://www.dfg.de/en/dfg-profile/about-the-dfg/what-is-the-dfg>

- ▶ The DFG is the largest **independent** and self-governing research **funding organisation** in Germany.
- ▶ It is an **association** under German private law.
- ▶ It serves **all branches** of science and the humanities by **funding research projects**.



# The DFG – Our Mission

<https://www.dfg.de/en/dfg-profile/about-the-dfg/what-is-the-dfg>



## The DFG

- ▶ funds research projects in the area of **knowledge-driven** research,
- ▶ maintains **dialogue** with society, politics and business, advises state institutions,
- ▶ supports the **transfer of knowledge**.

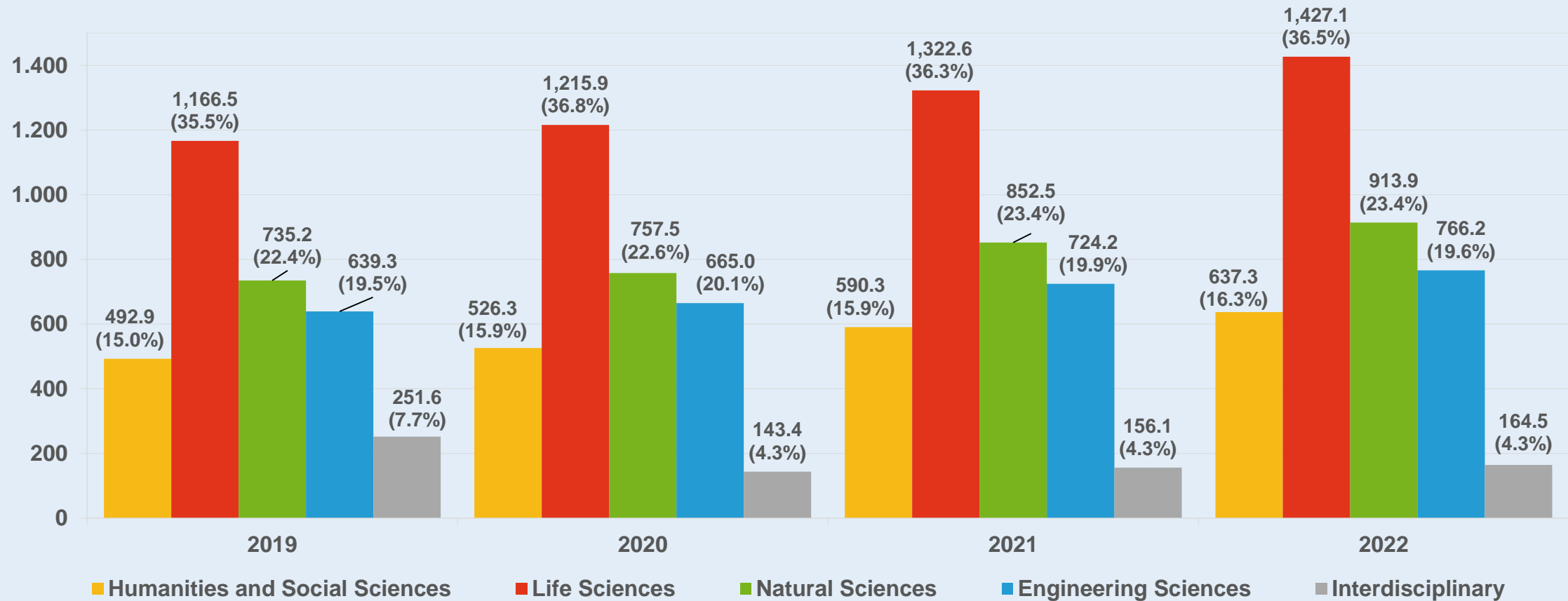
It takes particular care to promote

- ▶ international **cooperation**,
- ▶ **early career researchers**,
- ▶ **gender equality and diversity** in science and the humanities.



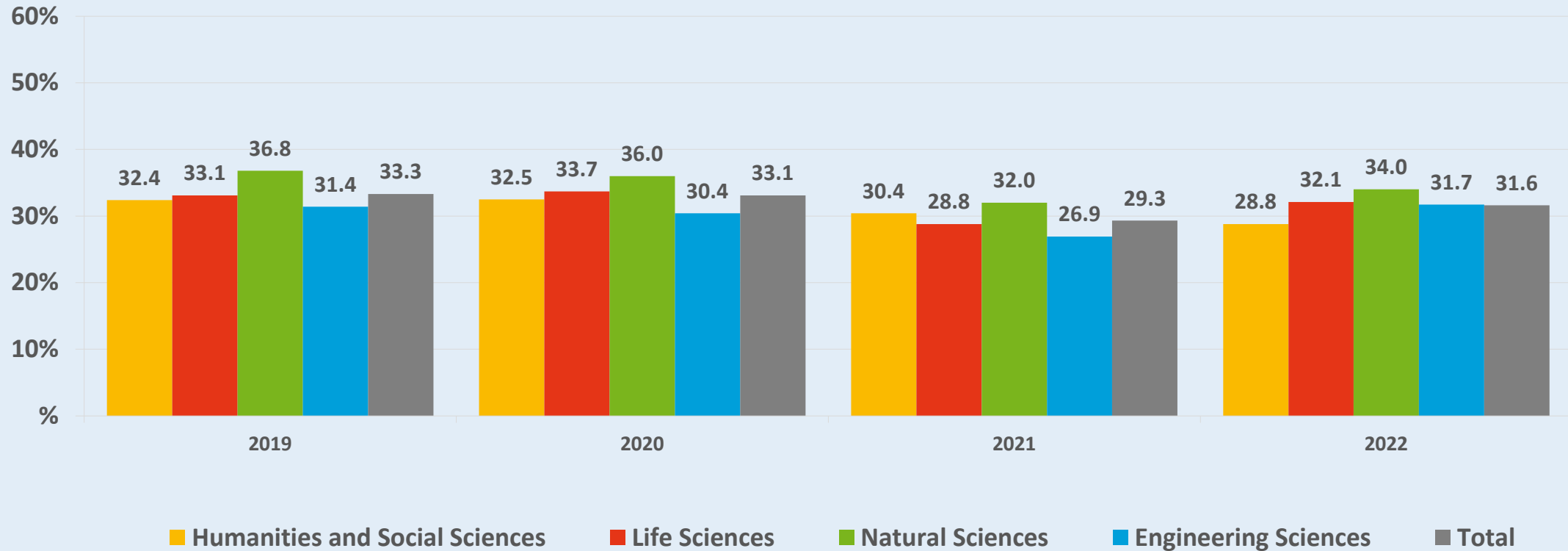
# Amount of Research Funding Awarded by Scientific Discipline for Each Calendar Year 2019 to 2022 (in €m and %)

[www.dfg.de/en/dfg\\_profile/facts\\_figures/statistics](http://www.dfg.de/en/dfg_profile/facts_figures/statistics)



# Funding Rates\* in the Individual Grants Programme by Scientific Discipline 2019 to 2022 (in %)

[www.dfg.de/en/dfg\\_profile/facts\\_figures/statistics/processing\\_times\\_success\\_rates](http://www.dfg.de/en/dfg_profile/facts_figures/statistics/processing_times_success_rates)



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





DFG Prospects: The Walter Benjamin Programme

## Researchers

- ▶ who have completed their scientific training, i.e. who hold a **doctorate** and
- ▶ who (would like to) work in **Germany**.





- ▶ Open, bottom-up choice of **research topics**
- ▶ **Basic research** in any field of science and the humanities
- ▶ No **age** restrictions
- ▶ Individual **career phases** and family-related career breaks are considered in the review process
- ▶ [10 Principles of Effective Career Support in Academia](#)
- ▶ No **deadlines\***

excl. Priority Programmes, international calls, Workshops for Early Career Investigators etc.

# Topics

1 | The DFG – About Us

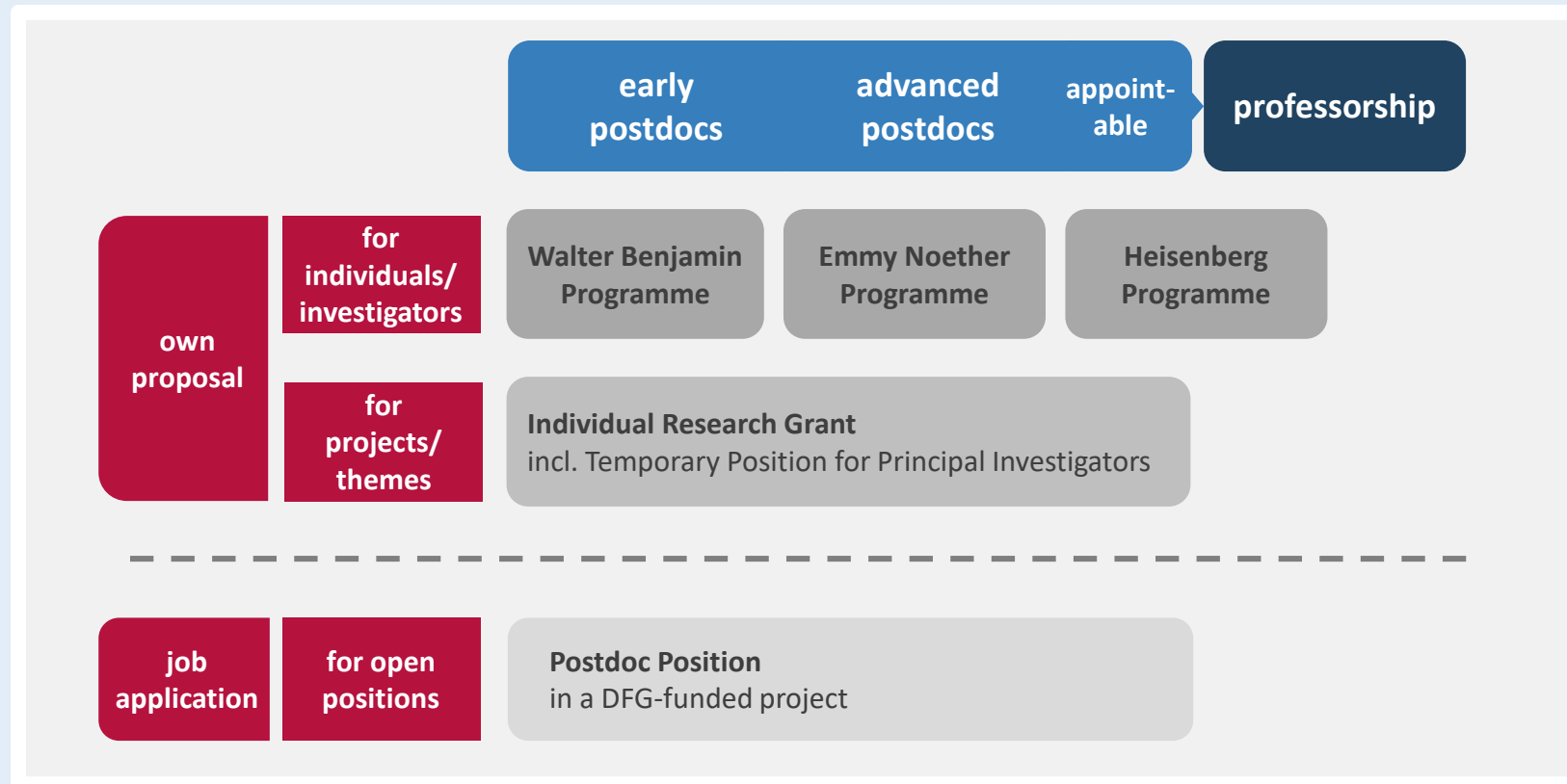
**2 | The Walter Benjamin Programme**

3 | Review Process and Advice

4 | Links and Resources

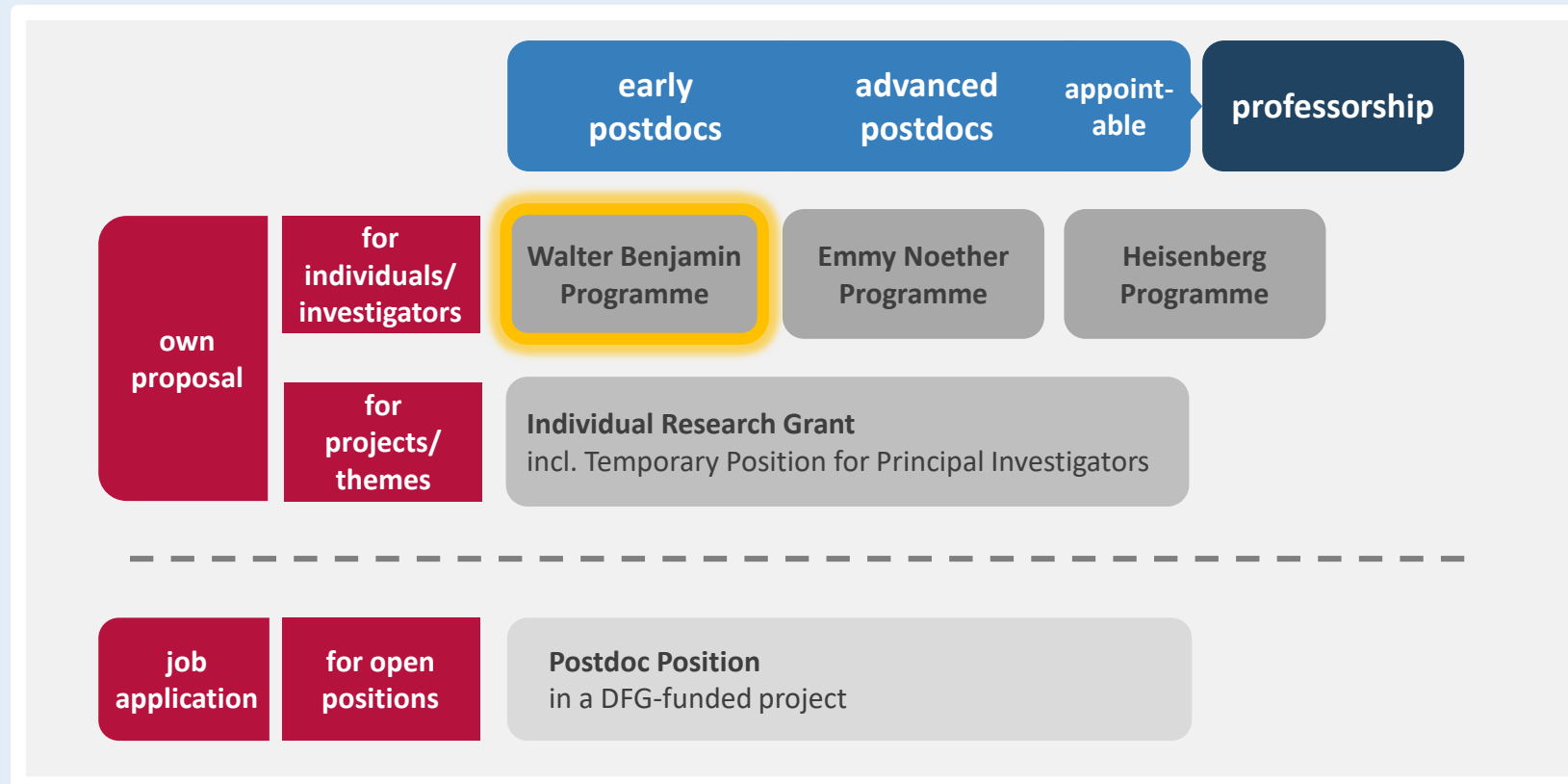
# DFG Funding Opportunities for Postdocs

[https://www.dfg.de/research\\_careers](https://www.dfg.de/research_careers)  
<https://www.dfg.de/en/research-funding/funding-opportunities/programmes>



# DFG Funding Opportunities for Postdocs

[www.dfg.de/en/research\\_funding/programmes/individual/walter\\_benjamin](http://www.dfg.de/en/research_funding/programmes/individual/walter_benjamin)





DFG Prospects: The Walter Benjamin Programme

- ▶ **Aim:** Promoting **autonomy and mobility** in an **early postdoc phase**
- ▶ **Mobility:** applicants should move to a **new host institution**, either abroad or in Germany – or combining stays at different places
- ▶ **Career support:** host researcher advises you on your research career and introduces you to new academic networks
- ▶ **Duration:** Funding for up to two years

## ▶ Own Project:

- Own, defined research project; **scientific support** by an experienced person is required, who assures the support
- Programme provides step towards more scientific responsibility and independence, as well as further thematic development after the doctorate

## ▶ Career Development

- own career planning is part of the application
- the scientific potential for further career steps is an evaluation criterion

## ▶ Research institution

- Research institution that allows publication of the results
- Non-profit context

## In Germany

**Position:** E13 TVöD/TV-L

(or position for temporary substitutes for clinicians)

You are employed by your host institution

## Abroad

**Fellowship:** 1,750 €/month +X

+ foreign allowance

+ cost of living allowance

+ child allowance (if applicable)

+ possibility of 6-months return grant

→ use the award calculator on the DFG website

- ▶ **Allowance for direct project costs:** 250 €/month  
→ host institution needs to provide all additional project costs





## Position in Germany:

- ▶ Support through *Bundeselterngeld- und Elternzeitgesetz (BEEG)*

## Fellowship abroad:

- ▶ **child allowance**
  - + € 400 per month for the first child
  - + € 100 per month for each additional child
- ▶ The fellowship can be extended by max. 12 months or costs for **childcare** can be reimbursed.
  - Up to 12 x € 1,750 = max. € 21,000
  - Childcare costs must be verified by presenting invoices and payment receipts
- ▶ Extension and reimbursement of childcare costs can be **combined**.

# Programme objective - Mobility

The Walter Benjamin Programme is a **mobility programme**

„Mobility“ means moving to a new **research environment**

- ▶ **As a rule**, a **change of institution** is required

A change of lab within the same institution is insufficient

- ▶ **Exceptions**

Required in the application: Justification of a specific and scientific mobility + justified exceptional cases

- Family reasons (local childcare, own health condition)
- Highly specialized issue, which is justified with the institution
- ▶ Criterion of mobility applies consistently for the entire funding period
- ▶ Supporting person should not be the previous doctorate supervisor



# Target group – Early stage of career

## Early postdoctoral training phase after doctorate

- ▶ No deadline x-years after doctorate
- ▶ Scientific support by an experienced researcher & development measures
- ▶ Orientation framework: EU definition of “recognized researcher (R2)” -> reference to scientific **independence** -> this depends on the content, **subject-specific**
- ▶ Indicators of independent project experience or capability

->Depends on the **individual CV**

# Target group - Eligibility

## **Irrelevant:**

- ▶ Nationality
- ▶ Fixed term position (position)
- ▶ Existing employment status (position)
- ▶ Current commercial employment

## **Earliest date to submit proposal:**

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



# Target group - Eligibility

## Eligibility in Germany (Walter Benjamin Position)

- ▶ No further personal restrictions on eligibility
- ▶ Previous affiliation to Germany's academic research system not relevant

## Eligibility abroad (Walter Benjamin Fellowship)

- ▶ Affiliation to Germany's academic research system is assumed
  - You have worked as a researcher in Germany for a continuous period of at least three years during your doctoral and/or postdoctoral phase.

OR:

- You have completed the majority of your schooling and higher education in Germany and, as of proposal time, have not spent more than three years abroad for research purposes after completing your doctorate in Germany or abroad



# Statement by the Host Researcher

- ▶ Content of the statement by the host researcher (module Walter Benjamin position):
  - **Ensure work environment**
  - **Scientific support** in terms of feedback on the progress of the project, scientific advice
  - Advice on career prospects and development of your own career profile, **concrete measures** for individual support (examples: integration into local structures; integration into professional networks; enabling participation in central conferences, professional and interdisciplinary further training offers)
  - **Provision of funds** to the extent necessary to carry out the project
- ▶ This is not a letter of recommendation, but shows the concrete **offer of support agreed** upon with the host before the application is submitted



# Differentiation to the Programme Individual Research Grants

- ▶ Walter Benjamin Programme <-> Individual Research Grants (incl. Temporary Positions for Principal Investigators as project leadership)
  - differ in their funding goals, requirements and funding criteria
- ▶ The **Walter Benjamin Programme** aims to fund the academic career of the applicant. A stay at a host institution in an **early career phase** is funded. The subject of the peer review is therefore also the **career potential** of the applicant. The project is scientifically accompanied by an experienced person.
- ▶ In the case of **Individual Research Grants** (incl. the module Temporary Positions for Principal Investigators), in contrast, aims to fund an independent project, the quality of the project is the focus of the evaluation, but not the career development of the project leader.
- ▶ parallel applications are not possible
- ▶ no interruption of a Research Grant project in order to receive funding in the Walter Benjamin Programme

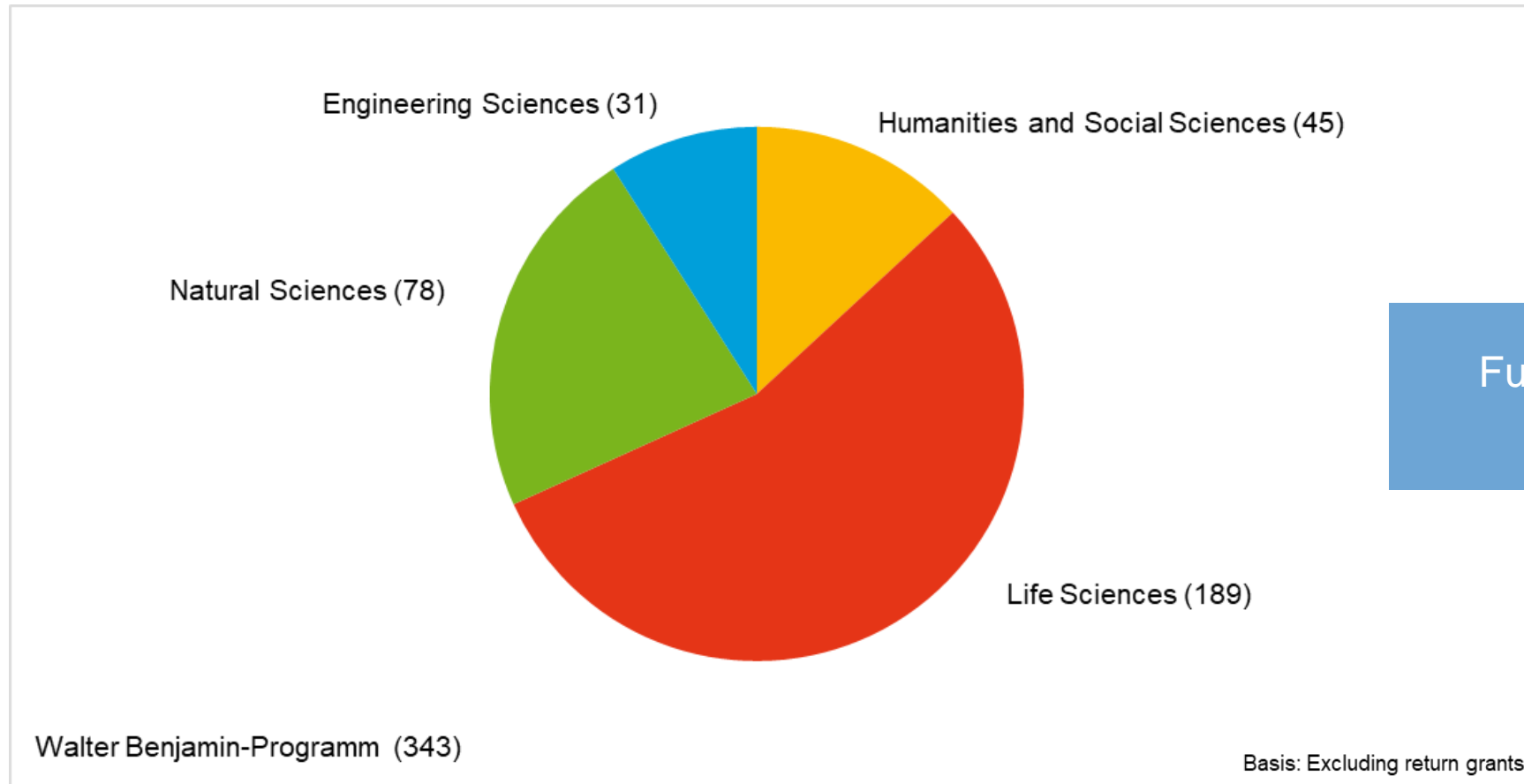


# Proposal Preparation – First steps

- ▶ Do I belong to the target group? -> early postdoctoral phase; in doubt contact the responsible DFG programme director for your field of science
- ▶ For candidates who want to be funded outside of Germany and only partly completed their schooling and university education in Germany -> check your eligibility
- ▶ Where is the perfect institution? Which experienced person in the scientific field of the project should give me scientific support? -> subject of the review process; institution is a research institution, not commercial context
- ▶ What funds/services do I need? Can I get by with the lump-sum research funds (€250 per month)?
- ▶ What does the supporting person do? -> negotiate which concrete measures; attach a written “host confirmation” (abroad) or “statement” (in Germany)

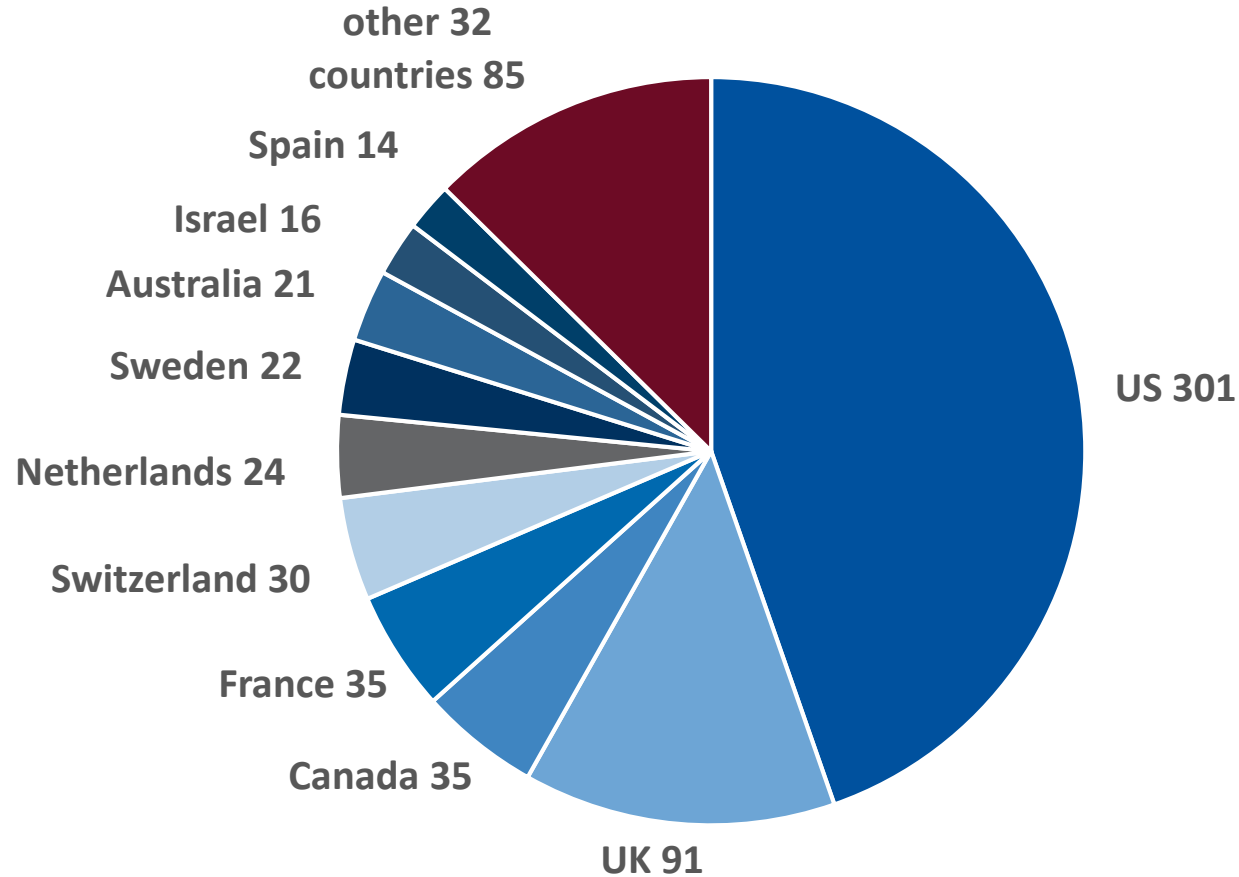
# Funded according to Scientific Fields

## Number of Walter Benjamin grantees by scientific discipline 2022



Funding rate 2022:  
56 %

# International Destinations for Fellowships\* in 2022



\* Fellowships in the Walter Benjamin Programme and the Research Fellowships Programme, without Return Fellowships. Fellows can have stays in different countries.

# Topics

1 | The DFG – About Us

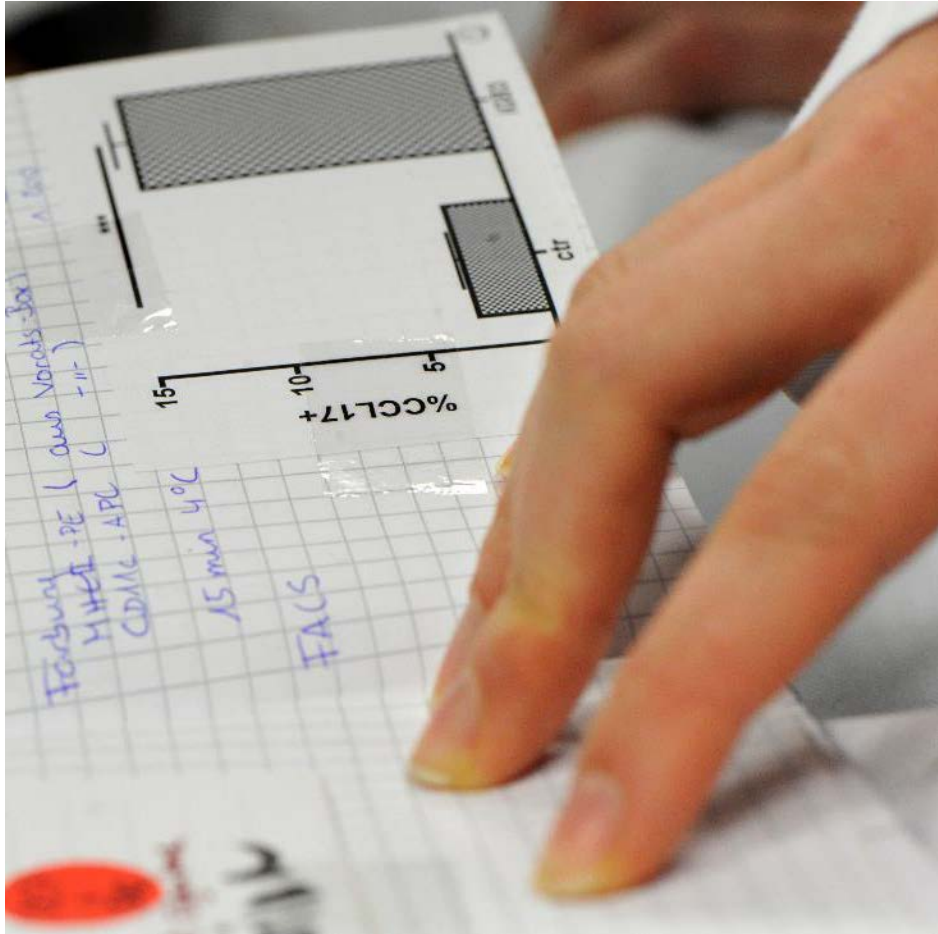
2 | The Walter Benjamin Programme

**3 | Review Process and Advice**

4 | Links and Resources

# Preparing Your Proposal

[www.dfg.de/en/research\\_funding/individual\\_grants\\_programmes/tips\\_proposals](http://www.dfg.de/en/research_funding/individual_grants_programmes/tips_proposals)  
[www.dfg.de/en/research\\_funding/individual\\_grants\\_programmes/proposal\\_information](http://www.dfg.de/en/research_funding/individual_grants_programmes/proposal_information)



- ▶ Start with smaller projects
- ▶ Carefully read and follow the guidelines and proposal instructions
- ▶ Necessary information can be found on the DFG website
- ▶ Questions? Ask for help

# DFG Contacts



For questions on **eligibility**:  
[procedures-researchcareers@dfg.de](mailto:procedures-researchcareers@dfg.de)

For **general questions** on programmes for  
**research careers**:  
[info-researchcareers@dfg.de](mailto:info-researchcareers@dfg.de)

**All DFG contacts**:  
<https://www.dfg.de/en/dfg-profile/head-office>

# Preparing Your Proposal

[www.dfg.de/en/research\\_funding/individual\\_grants\\_programmes/tips\\_proposals](http://www.dfg.de/en/research_funding/individual_grants_programmes/tips_proposals)  
[www.dfg.de/en/research\\_funding/individual\\_grants\\_programmes/proposal\\_information](http://www.dfg.de/en/research_funding/individual_grants_programmes/proposal_information)



- ▶ Put yourself in the reviewers' shoes
- ▶ Seek honest criticism from colleagues
- ▶ Plan on a feasible timeline: on average, the time to decision is over six months



# Preparing Your Proposal

[www.dfg.de/en/research\\_funding/individual\\_grants\\_programmes/tips\\_proposals](http://www.dfg.de/en/research_funding/individual_grants_programmes/tips_proposals)  
[www.dfg.de/en/research\\_funding/individual\\_grants\\_programmes/proposal\\_information](http://www.dfg.de/en/research_funding/individual_grants_programmes/proposal_information)



- ▶ Decide on the proposal language: English or German
- ▶ Inform DFG Head Office in case a conflict of interest or competitive scenario exists
- ▶ Communicate openly with DFG Head Office staff

# Preparing Your CV

[www.dfg.de/formulare/53\\_200\\_elan/53\\_200\\_en\\_elan.rtf](http://www.dfg.de/formulare/53_200_elan/53_200_en_elan.rtf)  
[www.dfg.de/en/research\\_funding/individual\\_grants\\_programmes/tips\\_proposals](http://www.dfg.de/en/research_funding/individual_grants_programmes/tips_proposals)  
[www.dfg.de/en/research\\_funding/individual\\_grants\\_programmes/proposal\\_information](http://www.dfg.de/en/research_funding/individual_grants_programmes/proposal_information)



- ▶ DFG's CV template
  - Include prizes, fellowships and awards
  - Mention time away from research relating e.g. to family, illness or dependent care; no details required
- ▶ List up to ten of your most important publications

# Submitting Your Proposal via *elan*

<https://elan.dfg.de/my.policy>

[www.dfg.de/en/research\\_funding/individual\\_grants\\_programmes/proposal\\_information](http://www.dfg.de/en/research_funding/individual_grants_programmes/proposal_information)

**DFG** Deutsche  
Forschungsgemeinschaft

### Anmeldung / Login

E-Mail Adresse /  
Email address:

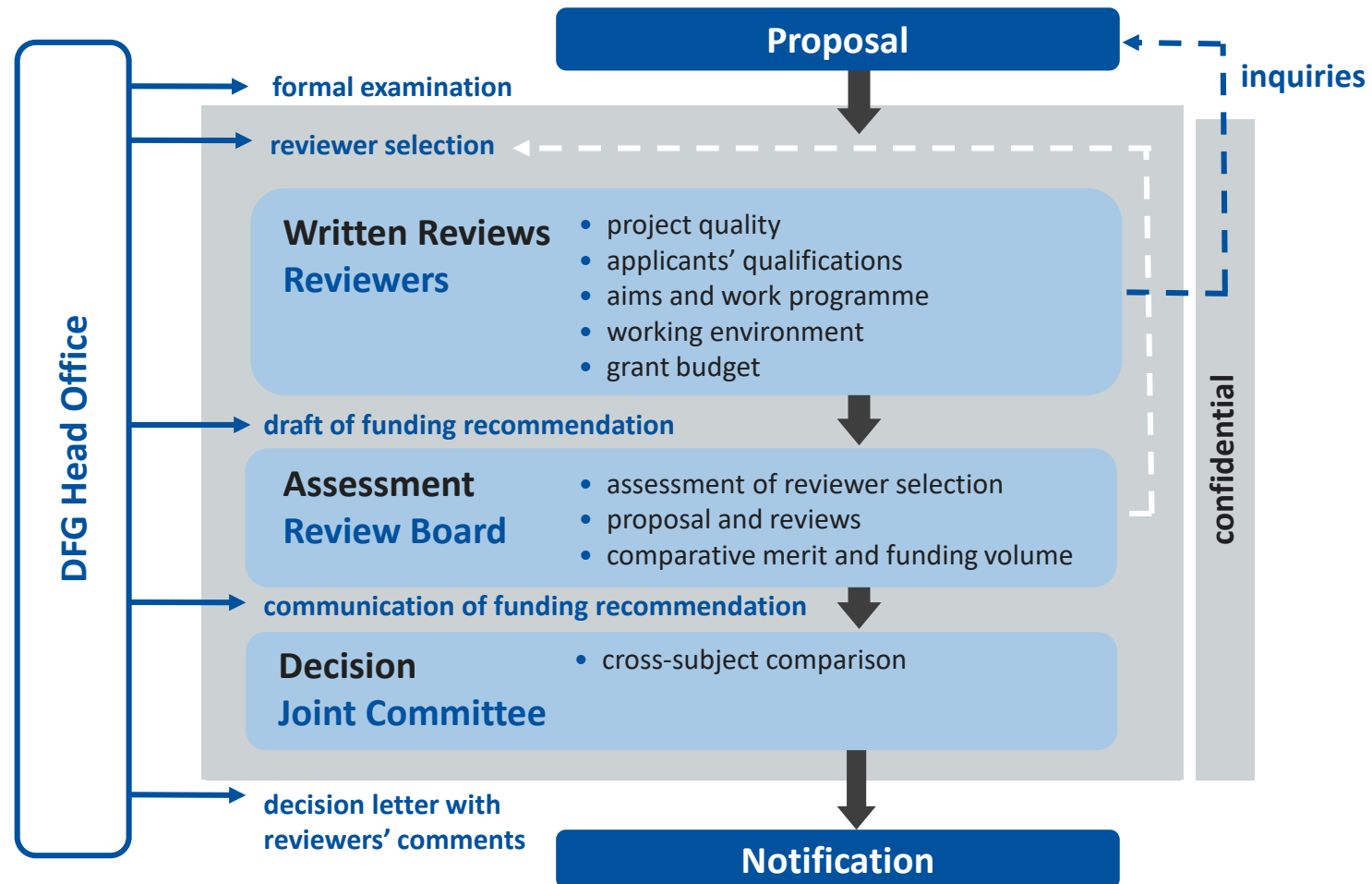
Kennwort /  
Password:

Sprache wählen /  
Select language:  Deutsch  
 English

E-Mail Adresse speichern /  
Save email address:

# Review Process in the Individual Grants Programme

<https://www.dfg.de/en/research-funding/proposal-funding-process/decision-making-process>



# In Case Your Proposal Is not Successful...

<https://www.dfg.de/en/research-funding/proposal-funding-process/individual-grants-programmes/approval-rejection>



- ▶ Don't be discouraged
- ▶ Take the reviewers' comments seriously but not personally
- ▶ Consult the DFG Head Office if you need advice or feel that you have been treated unfairly
- ▶ Consider the reviewer's comments – they might give you some pointers for reworking your proposal



- ▶ Develop your own and independent research profile
- ▶ Publish independently (or with various researchers)
- ▶ Be mobile and find the best environment for your research
- ▶ Build networks of collaboration partners

# Topics

1 | The DFG – About Us

2 | The Walter Benjamin Programme

3 | Review Process and Advice

4 | **Links and Resources**



# Links and Resources



- ▶ **Orientation** for early-career researchers: [www.dfg.de/research\\_careers](http://www.dfg.de/research_careers)
- ▶ Individual Grants Programmes – A **How-To Guide**: [www.dfg.de/en/research\\_funding/individual\\_grants\\_programmes](http://www.dfg.de/en/research_funding/individual_grants_programmes)
- ▶ **Video Clips**: [Faces: The Walter Benjamin Programme of the DFG – YouTube](#) and [Das Walter Benjamin-Programm erklärt \(with English subtitles\) – YouTube](#)
- ▶ Video clip on DFG decisions: <https://youtu.be/NUIfyUOOCM>
- ▶ Profiles of 25,000 German research institutes: <https://www.gerit.org/en>
- ▶ GEPRIS – database with all DFG-funded projects: <https://gepris.dfg.de/en/>
- ▶ Contacts: [DFG, German Research Foundation - DFG Head Office](#)
- ▶ FAQ: [DFG, German Research Foundation - FAQ: Walter Benjamin Programme \(WBP\)](#)
- ▶ Forms & guidelines: [DFG - Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft - Formulare und Merkblätter](#)