

## Call for research proposals

### “The economy of the future: New value added structures and business strategies”

Economic structures are constantly changing, driven by a variety of forces. Globalization, financialization, and digitization are often cited as interconnected forces that have the potential to magnify each other. However, the concrete impact that these general trends have on activity and change within companies and the business sector as a whole remains unclear.

We are looking for analyses that identify the relationships between changing value added structures, business strategies, business practices – and the forces driving them. These analyses are not to be confined to cause-effect relationships for individual products, companies, or even sectors. We also want to gain a deeper understanding of the economic consequences at the macro level for the German and European economies.

These analyses also show which national and international rules and conventions are best suited to counteract destructive effects of market and competitive forces and to enhance the effectiveness of efforts to improve work, employment, environmental standards, and the stability of democratic structures and processes. Such analyses are significant for the Hans Böckler Foundation because they offer new perspectives on *corporate governance* that allow for the expansion of decent work, co-determination, and labor standards.

The Hans Böckler Foundation is seeking **submissions of outline research proposals** that address the following **research topics**:

#### 1. Dynamic value added structures

Analysis of value chains and networks will take into account their dynamics, changes, and forms, specifically from the following perspectives:

- a. Sector and industry: Which players are driving changes in value added structures and how are supply chains, dominant actors, interdependencies, cooperation, and competition shifting within these structures?
- b. Geography: What trends are emerging in regional, national, and international supply chains and what role do emerging markets like China and India play?
- c. Earnings: What impact do changing practices and modalities in financial reporting and taxation have on value added structures? Where does the digital dividend come in when yields and profits

within value chains are redistributed as a result of digitization and new business models?

- d. The political environment in which value added structures are formed: What do global economic relations need to look like? What incentives can regulations such as those established within tax regimes, legislation, access to (IT) infrastructure, or co-determination offer to prevent or reduce the formation of monopolies and unbalanced power structures?

## **2. New business strategies**

Any analysis of economic transformation processes would be incomplete without also examining the changes taking place within companies and the way companies address challenges to their competitiveness. Therefore, we are interested in gaining insight into the following:

- a. The influence that owners and investors have on business structures and strategies and on new forms of business financing.
- b. The meaning of work and employment and other social and environmental aspects of corporate governance.
- c. Changes in the discourse at the management level and in the relevant information channels, consulting models, etc..
- d. New approaches and practices for business management and controlling, which are meant to map businesses' success or failure in achieving their goals.
- e. Innovation as the key to competitiveness and business strategy: How are innovation processes changing? For example, it is still largely unclear what role start-ups, "incubators", platform activities, and disruptive business models really play in individual businesses and in value chains.
- f. The scope and creative freedom that employee representatives and management have for transforming relationships with investors, shareholders, and supply chain partners.

**Who should submit outline research proposals?** Research scientists and scholars – including those in international consortia – in the fields of business administration (finance, controlling, management, and governance), economics, economic geography, information technology, law, political and social science are invited to submit outline research proposals based on their respective research approaches and methodologies. The research methodologies should seek to derive alternatives for the future on the basis of current empirical data.

**Plans for the funding stage:** The Hans Böckler Foundation aims to initiate a collaborative **research group**. The Foundation will head the group and coordinate its work. We want to include business insiders and practitioners as part of the research group. The research group shall identify and flesh out issues and topics and, by integrating research findings from the individual projects, achieve a better, deeper level of analysis. The aim is to use this framework to develop a **body of knowledge** for those directly involved in co-determination and other stakeholders (such as policymakers) on the following issues:

- Options for co-determination stakeholders to help shape the structural changes, including ideas for increasing workers' voice and democracy in these processes;
- Models and taxonomy of structural changes, the forces driving them, and their underlying conditions;
- The question how the two topics of "dynamic value added structures" and "new business strategies" (horizontal and vertical perspectives) interrelate and interact;
- Requirements on key decisions with respect to business, innovation, and industrial policy.

### **Submitting outline research proposals**

Please submit your idea for a research project **by December 19, 2018**, to <https://www.boeckler.de/65103.htm> as a project outline in electronic form. The project outline should identify gaps in the current research. Implementation or evaluation projects will not be funded. The project outline may be submitted in English. The working language for communications with the Hans Böckler Foundation and within the research group is German. Publications can be in English as well.

All submissions will receive feedback as to whether the project outlines should be further developed into full proposals that may be eligible for funding beginning on January 1, 2020. Please send any questions to [forschung-skizzen@boeckler.de](mailto:forschung-skizzen@boeckler.de).