

The Center for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences (Kolleg-Forschungsgruppe, KFG) **'Universalism and Particularism in European Contemporary History'** at Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich (LMU) invites applications for

three Junior Fellowships.

Applicants should be pursuing a **research project in contemporary European history since the 1970s**, **preferably focusing on religion and secularity**, or alternatively on imperial orders, the economy, or human rights. Applications with other research topics, connected to the overall agenda of the KFG, are welcome.
Junior fellows are appointed for the **summer term 2027** (April-September), with a preferred starting date on **1 April 2027.**

Project description

The Center for Advanced Studies (Kolleg-Forschungsgruppe, KFG)

Centers for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences (KFG), funded by the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG) are interdisciplinary research groups with exceptional funding conditions. They allow a large number of leading experts to convene and explore an innovative research topic over an extended period of time. After the successful completion of its first period of funding, our KFG "Universalism and Particularism" will begin its second funding phase in the spring of 2027.

The KFG 'Universalism and Particularism' investigates **universalist and particularist models of order in contemporary European history from the 1970s to the present**. Universalist claims aim to validate universally applicable rules. However, demands for such rules usually grow out of concrete interests. In contrast, particularist models reject any general claim and justify guiding principles that are oriented towards the construction of individual or group-related needs. The KFG research program asks how universalist and particularist claims were constructed in contemporary history and investigates the ways these claims helped conceptualize, justify, promote, or even prevent socio-political change. The KFG's overarching aim is to develop a history of Europe's transformation since the 1970s and, at the same time, to understand the European present in historical terms. The first period of funding (2022-2026) focused on analyzing concepts and their transfer in the various empirical research areas. In the second funding phase we turn to the functions of universalisms and particularisms and the interplay between them. Europe's recent history since the 1990s will feature even more prominently than it did during the first funding phase.

Research Focus `Neo-Imperialism`

This research area examines the resurgence and transformation of imperial ambitions in Russia, China and the United States and their impact on Europe's recent history and present. It explores the distinct historical trajectories, legitimizing narratives and political practices through which imperial projects combine universalist missions with particularist claims. Religious ideas, civilizational narratives and

exceptionalism are analyzed alongside economic power, military coercion and information warfare as means of advancing competing visions of world order.
The focus encompasses relations between empires and continuity and change within individual imperial projects, particularly since the 1990s. A central concern is the interaction between external imperial pressures and illiberal forces within Europe, and its consequences for democracy, human rights and European integration. This perspective also addresses Europe's own responses, including shifts in the European Union's proclaimed universalist commitments. Particular attention is paid to the hybridization of universalist and particularist claims and the emergence of illiberal forms of universalism.

Research Focus 'Religion and Secularity'

Religious concepts are used in designing both universalist and particularist models of order. This research focus analyzes religious and secular models of order, starting from the assumption that they are ambivalent and open to interpretation. We are especially interested in those religious or secular concepts that have gained political relevance in recent contemporary history, e.g., in the transformation of East (Central) European societies after 1989, the global financial crisis, and in the context of worldwide migration. At the same time, the research project examines intersections of religion and particularist ideologies such as nationalism.

Research Focus 'The Economy'

Economic ties are thought to reduce the risk of interstate conflicts. However, economic activity is always space- and time-dependent, and markets only arise in certain social orders. In the history of Europe since the 1970s, the universal and the particular in economic activity often overlap. In Western Europe, economic integration developed as a balancing act between the opening of internal borders and greater closure to third states. In Eastern Europe, economic integration projects extending beyond the EU, some of which are based on pre-1989 market structures, are developing. The validity of the idea of a liberal, open economic order is severely limited by both internal developments in the EU and external challenges. The research focus also examines the interaction of economic discourses with economic practices, with a special emphasis on academic discourses.

Research Focus 'Human Rights'

The postulate of human rights became attractive as a concept throughout the world in the 1970s and was a major driver of political protest in the pre-1989 dissident movement. With the democratization of post-communist societies, the issue of human rights seemed to become less important. Having said this, recourse to human rights formed a decisive element in the universalistic draft of the world order of liberal internationalism that allegedly triumphed in 1989–91. A closer look shows that this policy increasingly met with opposition. Since the 2010s, the EU has been confronted with the serious problem of maintaining a uniform standard of civil rights in several member states. The modern authoritarian and populist regimes of East (Central) European countries question the universality of human rights by trying to unmask them as a particular ideology that is directed against traditional family or cultural values.

Fellowships

The KFG fellowships are awarded for **3-6 months** during the **summer term 2027 (April-September)**. We offer **a stipend of €2,400 and a rent subsidy of up to €1,800 on a monthly basis** as well as **travel costs reimbursement** for a single trip to Munich at the beginning of the fellowship period and a single return trip at the end.

Apart from engaging in their individual research, fellows are expected to actively participate in the Center's weekly colloquia.

During the research stay in Munich, Junior Fellows will have the opportunity to cooperate with the KFG directors and co-applicants Martin Schulze Wessel, Kiran Klaus Patel, and Andreas Wirsching, Distinguished Fellows Marta Bucholc, Alexander Libman, and Angelika Nußberger, as well as the Senior Fellows.

Interdisciplinarity plays a significant role for the KFG's research. Applications are possible with topics contributing to any of the four research foci, or to the overall agenda of the Center.

Junior Fellow Workshop

As part of their fellowship, the Junior Fellows jointly organize a workshop in teamwork. The topic should correspond to the overall subject of universalism and particularism in contemporary European history and preferably be open to contributions from different disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, so that other members of the Center can also benefit from the output. The Junior Fellows team prepares the workshop concept in consultation with the KFG directors and co-applicants. The coordination office offers administrative support.

Requirements

- Applicants must have a PhD in a relevant discipline in the humanities or social sciences relevant for this project;
- The working languages of the KFG are English and German, therefore excellent oral and written proficiency of one of the languages is required;
- Regular presence at the Center in Munich is obligatory.

The KFG offers

- Participation in an interdisciplinary, innovative and prestigious DFG-funded joint research project;
- Access to extensive international networks of high-profile researchers in the social sciences and humanities;
- An open-minded, cooperative team;
- A monthly stipend and rent subsidy;
- Funding for a joint Junior Fellow workshop;
- Flexible working hours and family-friendly working time schemes;
- A fully equipped workplace.

Applications

Applications must be sent in English or German **in one PDF file** to the KFG coordination office: kfg20@lrz.uni-muenchen.de.

Applications must include:

- Signed application cover in English or German
- Letter of motivation describing the applicant's career path and current research interests;
- CV including list of publications;
- Outline of the planned research project and how it contributes to the agenda of the KFG (approx. 10,000 characters);
- Work sample (2-3 publications), preferably in English or German;
- Names and contact details of two potential referees.

The latest submission date for applications is **30 November 2026**. The preferred starting date for the fellowship is **1 April 2027.**

Please note that any costs arising in connection with your application cannot be reimbursed.

In its pursuit of academic excellence, LMU is committed to equality of opportunity and to a proactive and inclusive approach, which supports and encourages all under-represented groups, promotes an inclusive culture and values diversity. LMU is a family-friendly employer and is also responsive to the needs of dual career couples.

For further details about the fellowships, please contact the KFG coordination office: kfg20@lrz.uni-muenchen.de.

Selection Committee

Directors and co-applicants

- Prof. Dr. Martin Schulze Wessel
- Prof. Dr. Kiran Klaus Patel
- Prof. Dr. Andreas Wirsching

Distinguished Fellows

- Prof. Dr. Marta Bucholc
- Prof. Dr. Alexander Libman
- Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Dr. h.c. Angelika Nußberger

More information on the KFG and its research agenda can be found here:

- Website of the KFG "Universalism and Particularism in European Contemporary History"
- Wissenschaftsportal L.I.S.A.: Interview with Martin Schulze Wessel on the KFG (in German)
- Wissenschaftsportal L.I.S.A.: Interview with Kiran Patel on the KFG (in German)
- Wissenschaftsportal L.I.S.A.: Interview with Andreas Wirsching on the KFG (in German)
- Wissenschaftsportal L.I.S.A.: Interview with Angelika Nußberger on the KFG (in German)

LMU LUDWIG-MAXIMILIANS-UNIVERSITÄT MÜNCHEN

KOLLEG-FORSCHUNGSGRUPPE
„UNIVERSALISMUS UND PARTIKURALISMUS
IN DER EUROPÄISCHEN ZEITGESCHICHTE“

Application as Junior Fellow of the KFG “Universalism and Particularism“

Cover

Personal Information

Surname	
Given Name(s)	
Academic Title	

Information About Home Institution

Name	
Faculty/Department	
Address (incl. Country)	

Information About Planned Project

Title of Planned Project		
Planned Stay	from:	to:

I hereby apply as a Junior Fellow and confirm that all the data provided is correct and complete.

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Location, Date Signature of Applicant