

**Focus Area DynAge**  
Disease in Human Aging:  
Dynamics at the Level of Molecules,  
Individuals, and Society

**Information  
and  
Second Call for Applications 2014**

Speakers: Prof. Dr. Ulrich Keilholz  
Prof. Dr. Nina Knoll

Contact: Dr. Linda Parschau  
Project Coordinator DynAge  
Freie Universität Berlin  
Fachbereich Erziehungswissenschaft und Psychologie  
Arbeitsbereich Gesundheitspsychologie  
Habelschwerdter Allee 45  
14195 Berlin  
Email: [linda.parschau@fu-berlin.de](mailto:linda.parschau@fu-berlin.de)  
Internet: [www.fu-berlin.de/dynage](http://www.fu-berlin.de/dynage)

## **Focus Area DynAge 2<sup>nd</sup> Call for Applications 2014: Seed Money for Interdisciplinary Projects on Disease in Human Aging**

The Focus Area DynAge is a collaborative project of Freie Universität Berlin (FUB) and Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin (CUB), funded by the Excellence Initiative and both host institutions. It intensifies interdisciplinary research on aging-related disease processes, therapeutic interventions, and associated societal as well as ethical issues by joining expert knowledge from natural sciences, biomedicine, humanities, and social sciences. DynAge provides a unique and interdisciplinary environment to extend our knowledge on how molecular antecedents of ageing-related diseases correspond to individual and societal consequences.

DynAge is well underway in its mission to create interdisciplinary research aiming at high-level and prestigious external funding. To foster successful collaborative grant applications, DynAge now invites project proposals for seed money or supplementary funding of interdisciplinary research groups. Applying groups should be based at both the Freie Universität Berlin and the Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin and aim for or already be part of larger research consortia concerned with disease in human aging. The seed money should specifically support research in preparation of applications for third-party funding of future collaborative endeavors.

### **Core Criteria for Funding by DynAge**

Successful applications for this 2<sup>nd</sup> round of DynAge funding will meet the following criteria:

- (1) High quality and rigor of research questions and methods
- (2) Successful project ideas should already be part of a broad and unifying research endeavor. Thus, applicants are requested to identify and cooperate with other research groups or partner-projects (see below, *Scope of Cooperation*).
- (3) The project group's fit with the Focus Area's research aims: Investigation of age-related dynamics of diseases such as, the comparison of disease correlates across different stages of the human life span (see below, *Research Aims: Comparative Approach*).
- (4) Interdisciplinarity and integration of at least two horizontal levels of analysis within the Focus Area's matrix of cooperation (see *Structures of Cooperation*; Figure 1)
- (5) Fit with at least one of the four central disease groups (see *Structures of Cooperation*; Figure 1)
- (6) Evidence of planned or imminent third-party funding for (or ongoing support of) a larger-scale research consortium
- (7) Applications of interdisciplinary project groups with young or early career researchers (e.g. postdocs) are explicitly invited.

**Research Aims: Comparative Approach.** In contrast to other research networks that focus on disease and health in *old age*, DynAge promotes a *comparative approach that contrasts different phases of the life span*, to explore disease progression and treatment, individual management of illness, or associated societal, ethical or public health issues. All parts of the human life span relevant for disease development, progression, and treatment can be considered.

**Structures of Cooperation.** Cooperation within DynAge-funded interdisciplinary project groups should be organized along a network matrix with intersecting vertical and horizontal elements (see Figure 1). Vertical elements represent four groups of age-related diseases: **tumors, cardio-vascular disease, musculoskeletal diseases, and cognitive disorders/depression**. They are among the most relevant health challenges faced by aging societies and represent diseases for which great expertise is available at CUB and FUB. The horizontal organization of this Focus Area entails three perspectives:

**(1) Molecular level.** Core disciplines include (but are not restricted to) biochemistry, molecular biology, chemistry, pharmaceutical sciences, or biocomputing. Major research themes comprise (among others): molecular profiling and characterization of distinct protein-ligand interactions involved in disease development and treatment; identification of common themes in molecular interaction dynamics; understanding of the molecular foundation of selected diseases and treatments; manipulation of protein interactions in the laboratory (e.g. by drugs or genetic mutants).

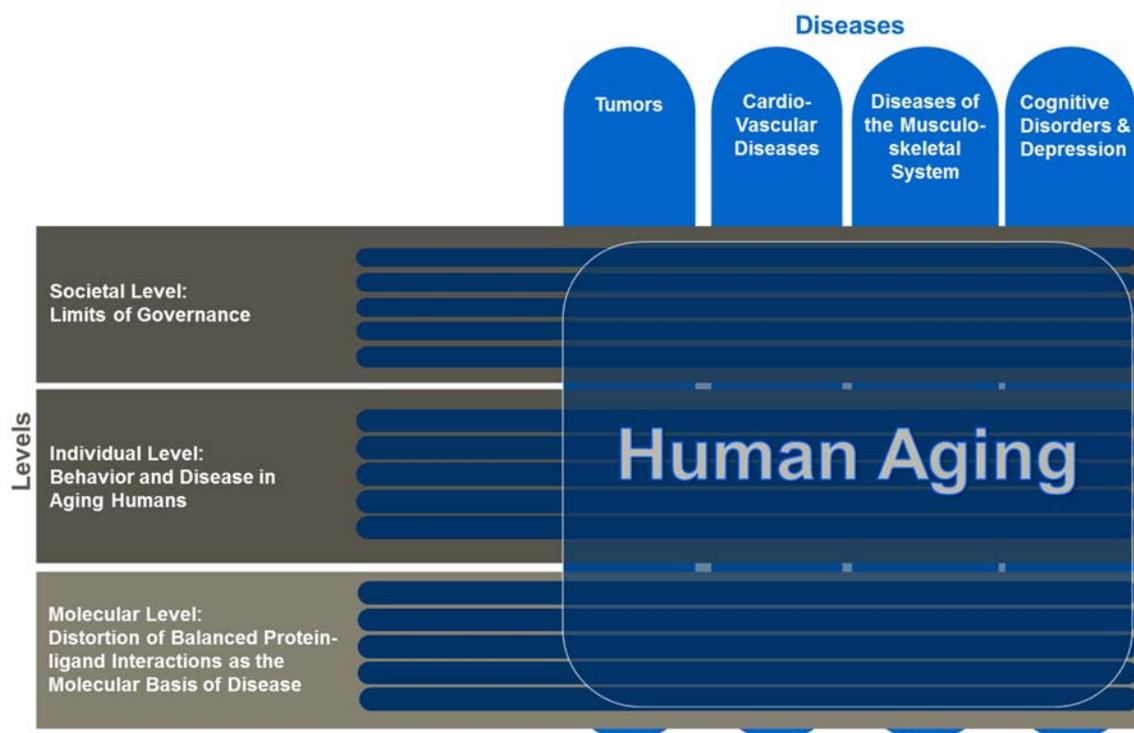
**(2) Individual level.** Core disciplines are concerned with the explanation and prediction of human behavior, cognition, and emotion as they relate to disease processes over the life span. They include (but are not restricted to) psychology, psychiatry, anthropology, philosophy, neuroscience, and clinical medicine. Major research themes to be addressed comprise (among others): Disease mechanisms, including behavioral, cognitive, and emotional mechanisms; individual disease management; co-regulation of disease-relevant behavior, cognition, and emotion by close social network members; interventions to change disease-related behavior, cognition, and emotion.

**(3) Societal level.** Core disciplines come from the social sciences and include (but are not restricted to) business and economics, public health, sociology, culture studies, ethnology, law, political sciences. Major research themes comprise (among others): Challenges of demographic change for societies in Germany and abroad; adjustments and new measures in health policy, social market economy, the organization of social security systems; impact of demographic shifts on the governance of societal health and well-being; coordination of reacting stakeholders; efficiency of “centralized governance approaches”; “Microfoundations of Change” i.e. upper- to lower-level path-dependencies determining the behavior of actors and contributing to the limits of governance; integrity, including aspects on lobbying and conflicts of interest.

One central criterion for successful application for DynAge funding is a clearly laid out structure of interdisciplinary cooperation entailing integration of at least two of three horizontal levels within the Focus Area’s matrix (Figure 1) and teaming up experts from the listed core disciplines with biomedical experts representing the four central disease

groups: tumors (e.g., oncology), cardio-vascular disease (e.g., cardiology, nephrology), diseases of the musculo-skeletal system (e.g., orthopedics, radiology, rheumatology, inflammation), and cognitive disorders & depression (e.g., psychiatry, neurology, pain management). For further characterization of the core-disciplines and research areas within the Focus Area's matrix of cooperation, please visit [www.fu-berlin.de/dynage](http://www.fu-berlin.de/dynage).

**Figure 1. DynAge: Structure of Cooperation**



**Scope of Cooperation.** In this second round of funding, DynAge will support project ideas that are part of a broader and unifying research endeavor. To guide the development of larger-scope ideas for interdisciplinary research consortia we advise that applicants should follow a modular approach. To do so, applying investigators should identify other research groups or partner projects that are either (1) also currently applying for funding by DynAge, (2) have already been funded by DynAge within the first round (09/2013-08/2014), or (3) represent pre-existing groups with which the current proposal can be meaningfully merged into consortia that are fit to attract third-party funding of a larger scope. All successful single applications will receive the full amount of envisioned seed funding (see below).

## Application and Funding

**Who can submit an application?** Interdisciplinary project groups are invited to submit research proposals. Composition of project groups is expected to reflect the Focus Area's aims and guidelines for interdisciplinary cooperation, including core disciplines representing a minimum of 2 horizontal levels within the matrix of cooperation and addressing a minimum of one of the Focus Area's central disease groups. Groups

should include members of the CUB *and* the FUB. Proposals including *young researchers (post-doc level)* are especially welcomed.

**What will the application look like?** Please, submit proposals in English, **use the provided form** and follow the outlined instructions.

Application forms are divided into 4 sections:

- (A) Project overview and information on applicants
- (B) Identification of other research groups with partner-projects that (a) are also currently applying for funding by DynAge, (b) have already been funded by DynAge within the first round (09/2013-08/2014), or (c) represent pre-existing groups with which the present proposal can be meaningfully merged
- (C) Proposal outline
- (D) General references

**When is the application due?** Submit your proposal electronically by **15 May 2014**.

**Where should the application be sent?** Please, send your application electronically to the Focus Area Project Coordinator (→ [linda.parschau@fu-berlin.de](mailto:linda.parschau@fu-berlin.de)) as a pdf-document.

**What will the review process look like?** Selection of successful applications will be guided by a 2-step peer-review process organized by the Focus Area's coordination group. (1) Members of the coordination group as well as external colleagues will be invited to rate the submitted proposals along the Focus Area's criteria for funding, using a scoring system. Special care will be taken to avoid conflicts of interest, e.g. by excluding co-authors of current proposals from funding decisions. (2) Applicants of projects that received high ratings will be invited to present their proposals to members of DynAge's selection committee (i.e., coordination group and invited external colleagues) on 02 July 2014. Funding decisions will be based on outcomes of this 2-step process.

**When will funding decisions be announced?** Applying interdisciplinary research groups will be informed of the outcome by the end of July 2014.

**What is the range of funding? What can funds be used for?** Following the peer-review selection process, a maximum of 7 successful applications by interdisciplinary research groups will be awarded seed money, i.e., 35.000 EUR per group for one year. This seed money should facilitate the preparation of applications for further third-party funding and can be used for pilot work, reviews, proposal preparation, and others.

Staff and/or consumables can be funded for a maximum of one year (09/2014-08/2015). As funds will be awarded to interdisciplinary research groups that are composed of members of both host institutions, groups are encouraged to *name two principal investigators, (i.e., one member of the FUB and one of the CUB)* who will be responsible for the administration of funds and project report on behalf of the group. Principal investigators of the Charité are encouraged to fill Focus Area-funded positions with Clinical Scientists.

**Funding period.** The 2014/2015 funding period will start 01 September 2014 and end 31 August 2015.

**Reporting.** Focus Area-funded interdisciplinary research groups will be required to report on the current state of their research project during the 2015 Focus Area Workshop in July 2015. Full project reports will be required at the end of the funding period (31 August 2015).

### **Further Information**

For further information on the Focus Area DynAge, please, visit our website at [www.fu-berlin.de/dynage](http://www.fu-berlin.de/dynage) or contact:

Dr. Linda Parschau  
DynAge Project Coordinator  
Freie Universität Berlin  
Fachbereich Erziehungswissenschaft und Psychologie  
Arbeitsbereich Gesundheitspsychologie  
Habelschwerdter Allee 45  
14195 Berlin

Email: [linda.parschau@fu-berlin.de](mailto:linda.parschau@fu-berlin.de)