



Boris Nemtsov
Foundation for Freedom



Russia: Known Unknowns

Call for Papers / Scholarship Program

Ruhr University Bochum (RUB) and the Boris Nemtsov Foundation for Freedom invite researchers to participate in **Russia: Known Unknowns Scholarship Program**.

The project aims to explore different angles for studying contemporary Russia in times of growing isolation and non-transparency. Scholars from various fields – **such as sociologists, political scientists, economists, historians and specialists in cultural studies and human rights** – are encouraged to apply. Authors of the best papers will receive scholarships and the opportunity to finalize their articles in Bochum, Germany; final versions will be published in an edited volume (the project's public report).

Russia: Known Unknowns is one of the pilot projects of **IDEAS FOR RUSSIA**, a research initiative led by the Boris Nemtsov Foundation for Freedom in partnership with the Faculty of Social Sciences (Charles University) and the Prague-based Institute of International Relations.



Research Focus

The project addresses a need for developing new approaches for studying current developments in Russia as well as the actions of the Russian government on the international stage. Growing isolation, the efforts the regime puts into concealing information, and restrictions on field research in the country create obstacles for meaningful scientific analysis. This new environment requires use of proxy variables and creative analysis of accessible data. The project aims to create a mind map of reliable research strategies for further evidence-based studies of Russian affairs. Therefore, individual submissions can cover various topics that can contribute to this goal, including but not limited to the following:

- *Accessibility and reliability of data sets regarding the state of the Russian economy, trade and demographics*
- *Reliability of public opinion surveys and other sociometric data*
- *Opportunities and limitations of using leaked data for research purposes*
- *Epistemic dimension of 'trust' and 'truth' construction in authoritarian regimes*
- *Practices of data production and fabrication in Russian media and judicial system*
- *Research strategies for gathering ethnographic data in closed regimes*
- *Strategies of indirect use of data produced by various state agencies and business enterprises for studying societal processes in Russia, and other topics related to the general research focus of the project.*

Call for Papers

All submissions should be emailed along with CVs and a brief cover letter to ideasforrussia@nemtsovfund.org. Each essay should be structured as a synopsis of an academic article related to the chosen topic under **5000 words**, and in English. Texts should demonstrate high academic writing standards and include proper citations and a bibliography. By submitting the paper, applicants agree to grant access to reviewing and sharing the manuscripts between organizers and experts involved in the selection process.

The **deadline** for submitting the papers and CVs is **June 10th, 2023**.

Researchers are encouraged to inquire about their papers' possible topics before submission by emailing ideasforrussia@nemtsovfund.org. The applicants will be informed about the decisions taken no later than **July 10th, 2023**.



Scholarships (Residential and Non-Residential) and Application Process

In their cover letters, applicants must indicate an intention to participate in the short-term residential scholarship program or the short-term non-residential scholarship program. They are also expected to provide a recommendation letter written by their supervisor, examiner, or someone who knows them well in academic and research contexts. These fellowships aim to help applicants finalise their articles and incorporate them into the project's public report.

The number of available residential scholarships is limited to three. Scholars awarded scholarships are expected to finalise their articles and participate in a few mandatory public and internal events organised by the Nemtsov Foundation and its partners. Scholars will also receive access to mentorship and other resources.

The allowance for a residential scholarship is 2300 Euros per month, with a maximum duration of 90 days (three months). The scholarship terms require the applicant's presence at Ruhr University in Bochum from early October and late December 2023. This scholarship will not cover the cost of accommodation. The University will provide accommodation on request for approximately 600 Euros per month.

The number of available non-residential scholarships is also limited to three. The allowance for the non-residential scholarship is 1000 Euros per month with a maximum duration of 120 days (September – December 2023). The scholarship allows for remote participation, but require active participation in online mentorship sessions as well as regular submissions of updated versions of their articles.

All participants will get access to mentorship and other resources provided by the project organisers offline and online and can submit final versions of the manuscript for publication. At the organizers' invitation, they are encouraged to participate in various public events, such as workshops and conferences.



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Eligibility Criteria

The call for papers is open to all scholars who study Russian affairs. There are no restrictions regarding the age of researchers or their academic position. However, we will not consider applications submitted by researchers affiliated with Russian universities headed by the rectors who signed the letter supporting the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

Selection Process

Organisers of the call will appoint a selection committee. The committee will include social scientists specialising in Russian and East-European affairs and other experts. Decisions regarding papers, as well as decisions regarding the scholarships, will be made by **June 30th, 2023**. The applicants will be notified of the selection process results by **July 10th, 2023**, at the latest.