

# Application guidelines

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**Application deadline:** Annually on 1 May, 14:00 CEST

**EMBC/EMBO Global partners:** Chile, India, Singapore, Taiwan

**EMBO subject areas:** Cell Cycle, Cell & Tissue Architecture, Cellular Metabolism, Chromatin & Transcription, Development, Differentiation & Death, Evolution & Ecology, Genome Stability & Dynamics, Genomic & Computational Biology, Immunology, Membranes & Transport, Microbiology, Virology & Pathogens, Molecular Medicine, Neuroscience, Plant Biology, Proteins & Biochemistry, RNA, Signal Transduction, Structural Biology & Biophysics, Systems Biology

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# 1. About

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The EMBO Global Investigator Network supports innovative and creative group leaders producing impactful research in the Life Sciences and who, at the time of application, are within their first six years of setting up their research groups in Chile, India, Singapore, or Taiwan. Through the EMBO Director's Special Fund, EMBO has opened the call to researchers based in African countries.

Global Investigators receive financial support for four years for training and networking activities, providing them with opportunities to form collaborations with scientists in their region and in Europe. They become part of an international network of more than 700 current and former EMBO Young Investigators, Global Investigators, and Installation Grantees. After these four years, they remain associated with the network and have access to some of its benefits.

Programme members are selected based on their intellectual independence, originality of their research topic and/or methodological approaches, and whose work will lead to major contributions in their field.

Applications to the EMBO Global Investigator Network are accepted annually via an online system. **Please check the eligibility criteria and carefully read the guidelines below before starting your application.**

Should you have any questions regarding your application, please contact the EMBO Global Activities office ([global@embo.org](mailto:global@embo.org)).

## 2. Eligibility

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Applications are accepted from candidates who meet the following criteria:

- Applicants should be within the first 10 years of having completed their PhD degree.
- Applicants should have been an independent group leader, or be on the path towards independence, for at least one year and for less than six years on 1 January in the year of application. This means that the applicant should have obtained the independent status between 1 January 2019 and 1 January 2024 for the 2025 round.
- Applicants must perform research in the life sciences (see EMBO subject areas on page 2) in Chile, India, Singapore, Taiwan or an African country. International experience and networks are considered a plus.
- There is no age limit for applicants to the EMBO Global Investigator Network.
- Applicants should have an excellent track record.
- Applicants are expected to have obtained sufficient funding to run their research group and/or projects.
- Applicants must have published at least one senior author research paper in an international peer reviewed journal from independent work carried out in their own research group (please see notes below). Review articles will not be considered.

- Applicants can only be interviewed twice by the selection committee.

Applicants must be able to attend an online interview on 17 or 18 November 2025.

**Please note:**

- EMBO defines an independent researcher as someone who:
  - Conceives original research questions and leads research projects, providing guidance and intellectual direction;
- Is able to apply for grants in their own name and report directly to funding agencies;
  - Submits manuscripts as the senior author ('corresponding author' is not considered equivalent to 'senior author');
  - Supervises graduate students and/or postdocs in their own research group.
- Senior author research papers that are “in submission” by the application deadline will be accepted as fulfilling the eligibility criterion. However, at least one senior author paper in an international peer reviewed journal must have "accepted" status by the day of the interview.
  - A senior author is a researcher who played a critical leadership role in the research project. Senior authorship signifies leadership and ultimate accountability for the research, reflecting a pivotal role in guiding and supporting the scientific work. This author is typically the group leader who conceptualized the original research idea; contributed towards securing funding for the project; provided critical guidance and intellectual direction; and ensured the scientific and ethical standards of the work.
  - First or last authorship will be accepted in cases where the role of the candidate is equivalent to a senior author.
- A senior author preprint with public in-depth peer reviews is accepted at the application and selection stage provided the following conditions are met:
  - The preprint is posted on a recognized community preprint server such as Arxiv, bioRxiv, medRxiv, Zenodo;
  - The peer reviews must be publicly available online;
  - The peer reviews were verifiably obtained from an independent preprint peer review service such as “Peer Community In”, “eLife” or “Review Commons”;
  - The reviews provide an in-depth expert analysis of the rigor and validity of the research and its contribution to the field.
- For female candidates with children, the limit of six years since independence is automatically extended by one year per child.
- For male applicants with children, the limit can be extended by the actual time taken off as paternity leave or – if their partner is working at least 80% FTE (full-time equivalent) – 3 months per child, whichever is longer.
- Illness, extended military service, and care responsibilities are considered as exceptional circumstances and will be analysed on a case-by-case basis. Special provision may also be made for clinical scientists.

Please contact the EMBO Global Activities office ([global@embo.org](mailto:global@embo.org)) for eligibility advice before applying if:

- You are unsure whether you meet the criteria for an independent group leader;
- Your transition to an independent group leader did not involve a formal change in position;
- You require an extension of the eligibility period due to illness, extended military service, care responsibilities, or other exceptional circumstances.

## 3. Application process

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Applications to the EMBO Global Investigator Network are accepted annually via an [online system](#).

### Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools

EMBO acknowledges the value of using Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, as well as human feedback, in the preparation of funding applications. Applicants are fully and solely responsible for the originality and accuracy of their applications. EMBO will continue following the developments in generative AI and adapt this policy as required.

### 3.1. Timeline 2025

<b>Deadline for applications</b>	1 May, 14:00 CEST
<b>Pre-selected applicants invited to interviews</b>	By 30 June
<b>Online panel interviews</b>	17 & 18 November
<b>Results announced to applicants</b>	By 5 December

### 3.2. Application forms

Candidates are asked to submit a **full application** by 1 May (14:00 CEST), which consists of:

- An online form;
- An offline form (protected Microsoft Word document) to be filled out and uploaded as a PDF file via the EMBO online application system;
- 3 reference letters (uploaded by the referees).

### 3.2.1. ONLINE FORM

In the [online form](#), you will be asked to provide:

- Basic CV data
- Your ORCID (if you do not have one, please register at <https://orcid.org/register>)
- Details of three referees
- A short description of your institute
- A short summary of your ongoing research (maximum 400 words). This summary is important in the pre-selection phase and in identifying potential reviewers for your application.
- A list of your former and current research group members. Make sure to indicate their start and expected end dates. If a research group member has a permanent/open-ended contract, specify this in the “Until” field.
- A list of all your former and current grants. Mark ‘pending’ if you have applied for a grant but it has not been approved yet. Please specify the funds available exclusively to your research group and the total amount of the grant **in Euro**, separated by “ / ” (E.g.: 60,000 / 180,000). Follow the same guidelines for grants where you are a co-PI in the project and part of the funds has been allocated to your research group.
- A PDF version of the completed offline form, adhering to the formatting guidelines.

Further instructions for completing the online form can be found on the online application system. Once you are satisfied that your application is final, please mark the ‘Form complete’ checkbox in the final section of the form and press the ‘Submit’ button.

## Reference letters

References from three scientists with whom you have/had a professional relationship (preferably former supervisors) are part of the application documents and **must also be completed by the deadline (1 May, 14:00 CEST)**. They can be listed and “activated” *before* the rest of the application is completed. Once referees are activated, the system will automatically send them an email with a link to submit their letter of reference online. The application form will remain open for the candidate to continue editing.

**We strongly recommend that you complete your referee contact details and activate them at least four weeks before the deadline to allow referees enough time to submit their letters.**

Reference letters must be submitted via the online system, accessible via the link each referee will receive via email. Referees shall follow the steps explained in the form and paste their letter text in the provided field. Letters sent to EMBO by email as PDF or Word files will not be accepted.

**It is your responsibility to check that the referees have received the request and completed the form.**

The reference status is listed on the home page of the EMBO application system. If a referee has not received the reference request, please contact the EMBO Global Activities office ([global@embo.org](mailto:global@embo.org)) so that a reminder can be sent.

If you have recently applied to one of the EMBO Programmes and wish to re-use a previous letter of reference, please fill out the name and postal address of the referee but enter [global@embo.org](mailto:global@embo.org) into the email field. The EMBO Global Activities office will copy the reference letter from your most recent application.

Applications that do not have all three reference letters are considered incomplete and will not be sent to the committee for review.

### 3.2.2. OFFLINE FORM

Please download the [offline form](#) from our website and fill it out following the instructions below:

- The form should be completed in *Helvetica or Arial font, size 10*.
- Margins and overall structure should *not* be altered.
- Highlighting, adding table borders, and any other formatting is *not* acceptable.
- The form should be saved in PDF format for upload via the online system.

### Curriculum vitae

- Provide your professional experience and education in reverse chronological order, i.e. with the most recent information first.
- Please include the month and year for the start/end dates. These should correspond to the dates entered in 'Scientific CV & Current Position' section on the online form.
- In general, the committee values mobility but recognises that there may be specific reasons why a candidate has remained at / returned to a former supervisor's institute. If applicable, please explain in brief.
- The 'Other relevant information' section should include only pertinent CV information and cannot exceed five lines. Do not attach any extra documentation.

### Publications

- Publications should be listed in a compact format, such as the one used in *The EMBO Journal*. Emphasise your name in **bold** and, where appropriate, *italicise* members of your own independent research group. E.g.:  
*Thiru A, Nietlispach D, Mott HR, Okuwaki M, Lyon D, Nielsen PR, Hirshberg M, Verreault A, Murzina NV, **Laue ED**. Structural basis of HP1/PXVXL motif peptide interactions and HP1 localisation to heterochromatin. EMBO J. (2004) 23: 489-499*
- If needed, use the following symbols to distinguish between authorship status:
  - \* - for corresponding author
  - # - for co-first/co-last author
  - § - for senior author, if not listed as last author
- Note that 'corresponding author' is not considered equivalent to 'senior author' (please refer to the notes in the [eligibility criteria](#) section).

- EMBO is a signatory of the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#) and does not use journal-based metrics such as impact factor during the assessment process. **Do not include these in your publications list.**
- List your best published or in-press primary research articles for each of the categories listed in the categories shown by the headings in the offline form:
- 'Manuscripts in submission' section: list manuscripts submitted to peer-reviewed journals or preprint services that offer peer-review services. Comment on whether this work arises from your independent research group or from previous work. If you are not the corresponding or senior author, please specify your contribution to each publication (please refer to the notes in the [eligibility criteria](#) section);
  - 'Publications arising from...' sections: list up to five best publications from different career stages in the relevant sections;
  - 'Other publications' section: list reviews, commentary/opinion pieces, book chapters, etc.
- If a publication from your independent group or a manuscript in submission is co-authored by your former supervisor, please briefly explain their role and contribution to the study.
- If you are working in an institution based in an African country, please specify those publications where you have played the role as described in the definition of a senior author (please refer to the notes in the [eligibility criteria](#) section).
- Underline your three best publications (see below).

## Your three best publications

- Provide details of your three best publications, including a summary and a short explanation of why you chose each one including a summary of the findings, the significance of the studies, and your contribution to each publication (max. 1000 characters including spaces).

## Research plan

Describe the research topics and future directions of your lab in no more than three pages, excluding bibliography. Include details about:

- The background and research question(s), considering that the scientific expertise of the committee is diverse
- Preliminary work and achievements generated by yourself/your research group
- The experimental plan to address the research question(s). Be specific, clear, and concise.
- The novelty and feasibility of your plan, explaining why your scientific question is relevant, unique, commenting on limitations. The proposed research objectives should not be too broad. Applications that describe too broad a topic are generally not selected.
- What future work you plan to carry out, what approach will you follow, and what its potential impact is.
- Do not copy/paste the research summary you provided on the online application form or an abstract of one of your publications.



- Figures are included in the page count. They can be added by using copy/paste or by dragging a jpg/png file into the text if the “insert” menu is not available.

## Networking

The EMBO Global Investigator Network provides programme members with a grant which specifically supports training and networking activities, fostering opportunities to establish new collaborations with scientists in their region and in Europe.

In this section, describe how the programme would benefit you, your career, and your group members.

## Letter of institutional endorsement

Your application should be accompanied by a letter of endorsement from your host institute either confirming you have obtained the status of independent group leader between 1 January 2019 and 1 January 2024 or confirming when you are expected to achieve your independent group leader position. Please append this letter to the end of your offline form and submit the file as a single PDF file.

# 4. Selection procedure

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All incoming applications are screened by the EMBO Global Activities office to ensure that they are complete and the eligibility requirements are met. Candidates receive a confirmation that their application has been received within the next 2-3 working days. Candidates who are considered ineligible will be given a couple of days to appeal or provide more information about their application.

## 4.1. Pre-selection

Eligible applications are sent to the EMBO Global Investigator Network Committee for screening. Each application is independently evaluated by four committee members. The EMBO Global Investigator Network Committee Guidelines can be found on the [EMBO website](#).

The committee pre-selects around 20 candidates, who are invited to present their research in an online interview. All candidates are informed of the outcome of their application by email.

## 4.2. External evaluation by an EMBO Member

Each pre-selected application is sent for confidential review to an EMBO Member with expertise in the candidate's area of research to provide an additional assessment to the committee. Candidates will be given the opportunity in advance to exclude EMBO Members from reviewing their application to avoid potential conflicts of interest. The EMBO Members send a written report of their review to the EMBO Office. This assessment focuses on the candidates' standing in the field and the feasibility of their proposed work. These reports are shared with the Global Investigator Network Committee members and considered in the evaluation process.

## 4.3. Panel interview

Pre-selected candidates are interviewed individually by the EMBO Global Investigator Network Committee using a panel interview format. The interviews take place in a hybrid format: committee members are present on-site, and the candidates are connected remotely (via Zoom). The interviews are conducted by two sub-panels in parallel, each panel consisting of 5 members of the Global Investigator Network Committee (a list of current committee members can be found on page 2 of this guide).

Pre-selected candidates must prepare a 10-minute presentation summarising their current projects and future research directions. The EMBO Global Activities office will provide detailed instructions and tips on how to prepare the presentations approximately two months before the interview.

The candidate's presentation is followed by 10 minutes of discussion with the committee.

All candidates will be required to submit a backup video of their presentation in advance. This will be shared with the interview panel in case of connection issues, in which case candidates will be asked to dial in via phone to complete the Q&A part of the interview.

## 4.4. Final selection

A final decision is made after the interviews by the whole EMBO Global Investigator Network Committee. Annually, 8 to 12 new EMBO Global Investigators are selected.

All candidates are notified of the outcome of their application by email within a week of the interview.

In case of rejection, pre-selected candidates receive feedback from the committee on their written application and interview performance.

**Please do not contact the committee members directly.** This may lead to your application being excluded from the review process. Any requests should be addressed to the EMBO Global Activities office ([global@embo.org](mailto:global@embo.org)).

# 5. Selection criteria

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EMBO is looking for the best and most promising independent researchers that have recently established their research groups in Chile, India, Singapore, and Taiwan. Through the EMBO Director's Special Fund, EMBO has opened the call to researchers based in African countries. Although a geographically balanced set of selected network members is desirable, the primary selection criterion applied by all EMBO Committees is scientific excellence.

EMBO is a signatory of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) and as such does not use publication metrics such as the Journal Impact Factor during the assessment process (see <https://sfdora.org> for further details). Applicants are asked NOT to include publication metrics in their publication list.

The following aspects of each application are evaluated in all phases of the selection process:

## **TRACK RECORD**

Criteria for evaluating the track record:

- Scientific achievements and professional development to date: Are they an indication that this is an outstanding scientist?
- Scientific breadth and depth: Does the candidate have a thorough understanding of their field and the implications of their research beyond; Has the applicant shown the ability to tackle new and important problems?
- International experience and networks are considered an asset: Has the candidate carried out research abroad or, alternatively, established diverse collaborations?

## **RESEARCH**

Criteria for evaluating the research:

- Hypothesis-driven project plan: Does the proposed research stand on a solid, hypothesis-driven plan while remaining ambitious in the field?
- Ambition: Is the proposed research original and likely to lead to novel contributions in the field?
- Potential for leadership: Does the applicant have the potential to become a future leader in their field, being recognized for their scientific contributions?

## **GROUP AND RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT**

Criteria for evaluating the group and research environment:

- Group size and funding sources: Are the number and the expertise of research group members and the available funds sufficient to undertake the described research?
- Host institute: Is the research environment supportive of the candidate's research, e.g. equipment, funding, relevant colleagues, etc?

## **INDEPENDENCE**

Criteria for evaluating the candidate's independence:

- Operational independence:
  - Is the candidate financially independent, able to apply for grants in their own name, and report directly to funding agencies?
  - Is the candidate able to submit manuscripts as senior author (“corresponding author” is not necessarily considered equivalent to “senior author”).
  - Is the candidate responsible for supervising graduate students and/or postdocs in their own research group?
- Intellectual independence:
  - Is the candidate conceiving and independently pursuing their own research ideas?
  - What is the influence of former supervisors and institute heads on the candidate's current research?

## **CANDIDATE'S PERFORMANCE DURING THE INTERVIEW**

Criteria for evaluating the candidate's response to questions:

- Maturity:
  - Does the candidate have a solid understanding of the background, being able to place their work within a broader context?
  - Does the candidate address the questions appropriately, showing strategic thinking?
- Clarity of communication:
  - Does the candidate present their research project in a clear and logical manner?
  - Does the candidate communicate clearly how their discoveries will shed light on other important questions in biology?