

Committee Guidelines 2022

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Application deadline: 1 June annually

EMBC Associate Member States: India, Singapore

Countries / territories covered by a co-operation agreement: Chile, 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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EMBO Global Investigator Network Committee 2022:

Noel F. Lowndes (IE) (Chair)
Manuela Baccharini (AT)
Chris Bowler (FR)
Toni Gabaldón (ES)
Cayetano González (ES)
Gillian M. Griffiths (UK)
Marc Lecuit (FR)
Marina V. Rodnina (DE)
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1. The EMBO Global Investigator Network

1.1. About

The EMBO Global Investigator Network supports group leaders who, at the time of application, are within their first six years of setting up their laboratories in Chile, India, Singapore or Taiwan.

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 600 current and former EMBO Young Investigators, Global Investigators and Installation Grantees.

The programme selects 8 to 10 new investigators annually. Selected researchers have full benefit of all programme activities for four years and are referred to as **current programme members** during this period. After these four years, they will be referred to as **former programme members** but will remain associated with the network and have access to some of its benefits.

1.2. Summary of benefits

Funds are available for EMBO Global Investigators for:

- Visiting other research institutions to give a scientific seminar or to plan or continue a collaboration
- Training in research leadership and management skills through EMBO Lab Leadership Courses
- Inviting researchers to give scientific lectures at their institute
- Sending members of their research group to another laboratory to carry out experiments or learn a technique
- Organising joint group meetings with other laboratories
- Attending or organising regional or international scientific meetings
- Attending EMBO Young Investigator Network annual meetings
- Arranging lab retreats
- Covering fees for publications in EMBO Press journals
- Childcare support when attending conferences
- Manuscript and grant proposal editing services
- Professional development courses

2. The EMBO Global Investigator Network Committee

2.1. Terms of reference

EMBO committees act in an advisory role to EMBO Council. The authority to make decisions on the funding of applications to the EMBO Global Investigator Network has been delegated by EMBO Council to the EMBO Global Investigator Network Committee.

The EMBO Global Investigator Network Committee comprises 10 EMBO Members with different areas of scientific expertise. Committee members normally serve a four-year term. The Global Investigator Network Committee suggests replacements for outgoing committee members and the suggested names are submitted to EMBO Council for appointment. New committee members are invited by the EMBO Global Activities office.

The Chair of the committee is selected by the committee (normally a current member with some experience on this committee), and the proposed name is brought to EMBO Council for appointment. The chair serves a term of three years in addition to the number of years they have already served on the committee. When a chair finishes their term, the committee members will be asked by written procedure to propose a new chairperson. Only proposals received by written procedure prior to the committee meeting can be voted upon.

The Global Investigator Network Committee meets once per year to interview the top candidates and make the final selection. All proposals are confidential until they are approved by the Global Investigator Network Committee and publicly announced.

All travel and accommodation expenses incurred by the committee members attending committee meetings are covered by EMBO.

2.2. Tasks of the Committee

The Global Investigator Network Committee is responsible for the selection of EMBO Global Investigators. About 50 applications are received annually, and 8 to 10 new EMBO Global Investigators per year are selected.

The evaluation of the applications includes a pre-selection stage performed remotely and an online interview with the top ranked candidates.

The committee receives an annual report summarising the programme's activities.

2.3. EMBO Conflict of Interest Policy

Committee members are asked to indicate prior to their involvement in the evaluation any real or perceived conflict of interest that may arise in evaluating any of the candidates. Please take note of EMBO's Conflict of Interest Policy in Annex I (page 10).

The following situations may arise for Global Investigator Network Committee members:

Situation	Level of conflict	Consequence
Being an advisor for the applicant	High	Excluded from review process*
Being an active collaborator of the applicant or having collaborated during the previous five years	High	Excluded from review process*
Being a partner of the applicant	High	Excluded from review process*
Having a PhD or postdoctoral/training relationship now or during the previous five years	High	Excluded from review process*
Working in same department as the applicant	High	Excluded from review process*
Having a financial interest in the application	High	Excluded from review process*

*Cannot be assigned as the primary reviewer of the proposal and cannot participate in the discussions related to that particular application (needs to leave the room while the discussion takes place). For any questions about a potential conflict of interest, please contact the Global Activities office.

2.4. Confidentiality

Strict confidentiality is expected regarding all applications. Information received during the review process and the committee meeting should not be relayed to third parties. Please see Annex II (page 11) for further details.

2.5. Data protection

Committee members must destroy any personal data provided to them for the purpose of a selection (application files including references, etc.) within six months after the conclusion of the respective selection procedure. Please see Annex II (page 11) for further details.

3. Selection procedures

3.1. Overview

About 50 applications are received annually. The Global Activities office screens the applications to ensure that they are complete and the eligibility requirements are met.

Eligibility criteria checked by the office

- Applicants should have been an independent group leader for at least one year and for less than six years on 1 January in the year of application.
- Applicants must perform research in the life sciences (see EMBO subject areas) in an EMBC Associate Member State (currently India and Singapore) or countries / territories covered by a cooperation agreement (currently Chile and Taiwan).
- Applicants must have published at least one last author research paper in an international peer reviewed journal from independent work carried out in their own laboratory. EMBO will consider papers published on preprint servers (arXiv, BioRxiv, PeerJ., etc.) but a last author publication in an international peer reviewed journal is still a requirement by the time of the interview.
- Applicants must not have applied to the programme more than once in previous years.

Please note:

- Last author research papers that are “in submission” by the deadline (1 June 2022) are accepted. Last author reviews are not considered.
- 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 and other care responsibilities are considered as exceptional circumstances on a case-by-case basis. Special provision may also be made for clinical scientists.

The evaluation of the applications by the EMBO Global Investigator Network Committee includes a pre-selection stage performed remotely and a personal interview with the top ranked candidates. Please see the list of **evaluation criteria** to be considered on page 9.

The committee pre-selects around 20 candidates, who are invited to attend an online interview. The committee is divided into two groups who each interview around 10 candidates.

Each pre-selected application is also sent for written review to an EMBO Member with expertise in the candidate's area of research to provide an additional assessment to the committee.

A final decision is made at the EMBO Global Investigator Network Committee meeting, and candidates are notified of the outcome of their application by email. Annually, 8 to 10 new EMBO Global Investigators are selected.

Timeline 2022

Relevant dates to the committee members are indicated in bold.

Deadline for applications	1 June
Application files sent to the committee	15 June
Deadline for scoring applications	15 July
Pre-selected applicants invited to interviews	By 31 July
Committee meeting and interviews	23 November
Results announced to applicants	By 30 November

3.2. Pre-selection

Each application is sent to four committee members for evaluation and ranking. Depending on the total number of applications received, each committee member is assigned approximately 20-25 candidates. Any real or perceived conflicts of interest should be declared immediately so that the applications can be re-assigned.

Committee members receive a secure web link to download the applications as PDF files within two weeks after the application deadline. Each application file contains:

- A cover form including a short version of the CV, details of the three scientists providing letters of reference, a summary of the research plan and details of laboratory members and funding available.
- An application form including full CV, list of publications, details of the applicant's three best papers and a three-page description of the applicant's research.
- Three letters of reference. Please note that reference letters submitted to the EMBO Young Investigator Programme can be re-used if requested by the applicant.
- A short description of the host institute's facilities relevant to the applicant's research.

Pre-selection scoring key

Applications should be scored as follows:

A: strong candidate for interview

B: potential candidate for interview

C: not strong enough to interview

D: weak candidate, not recommended

Scores are expected from committee members by **15 July 2022**. Based on the scores received, and in consultation with the Committee Chair, the Global Activities office draws up a list of the approximately 20 top ranked candidates who will be invited to the interviews.

3.3. External assessment

For each pre-selected application, an EMBO Member with expertise in the applicant's area of research is requested to provide a written confidential assessment of the candidate, focusing on their standing in the field and the feasibility of the proposed work.

3.4. Assignment to committee members

Each committee member is assigned to one of two panels and participates in the interview of around 10 candidates. Ahead of the meeting, the Global Activities office sends all committee members a list of candidates to be interviewed together with the external assessment's reports.

Any real or perceived conflicts of interest regarding particular applications should be declared prior to the final assignments.

Each member is assigned as a **primary interviewer** for one to three applicants. In this role, they lead the discussion on the candidate during the committee meeting, i.e., give a short summary of the candidate's application, credentials, suitability of the work environment, external reviewer's comments and point out potential issues to be explored.

3.5. Committee meeting with interviews

A final decision is made at the EMBO Global Investigator Network Committee meeting that takes place at EMBO in Heidelberg on 23 November 2022.

Interviews are conducted virtually by the two panels in parallel. Each candidate has a 30-minute time slot: 10 minutes to present their work followed by 10 minutes for questions. The remaining 10 minutes are reserved for the committee to discuss the application and provide a preliminary ranking in comparison to other candidates already interviewed.

After the interviews, the committee members compare and discuss the rankings and make the final selection of EMBO Global Investigators. Candidates are informed of the outcome of their application by email.

4. Evaluation criteria

EMBO is looking for the best and most promising independent researchers that have recently established their laboratories in Chile, India, Singapore and Taiwan. Although a geographically balanced set of selected network members is desirable, the primary selection criterion applied by all EMBO Committees is scientific excellence.

Committee members should keep in mind that 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 shall be evaluated in all phases of the evaluation process:

TRACK RECORD

Criteria for evaluating the track record:

- **Outstanding quality:** Are the publications to date an indication that this is an outstanding scientist?
- **Scientific breadth:** Has the applicant shown a willingness to change research area or the ability to tackle new and important problems?

RESEARCH

Criteria for evaluating the research:

- **Ambition:** Is the proposed research ambitious 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?

GROUP AND RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

Criteria for evaluating the group and research environment:

- **Size and funding sources:** Is the number of laboratory members and the available funding sufficient to undertake the described research?
- **Host institute:** Is the research environment conducive to competitive research?

INDEPENDENCE

Criteria for evaluating the group and research environment:

- **Operational independence:** The candidate should supervise their own PhD students and have financial independence.
- **Intellectual independence:** What is the influence of former supervisors and institute heads on the candidate's current research?

Annex I: EMBO Conflict of Interest Policy

EMBO is supported by several expert committees in the evaluation of applications or nominations submitted to any of its programmes and activities. The task of the evaluator is to ensure the confidential, fair and equitable peer review of the submissions. In this capacity the evaluator shall work independently and not represent any organization. The evaluators commit themselves to strict confidentiality and impartiality for this task and shall not discuss the proposal with anyone not directly involved with the peer review of the candidate/proposal.

Persons who are involved in the evaluation of applications or nominations submitted to any of the EMBO programmes and activities shall declare to the EMBO Office any conflict of interest in relation to any candidate or proposal prior to their involvement in an evaluation. Persons with a conflict of interest will be exempt from the review, evaluation and decision-making process for the evaluation in question.

Conflicts of interest include:

1. Having a personal relationship with the candidate or proposer, or, in the case of a fellowship applicant, with the future supervisor/host.
2. Having supervised the candidate for a PhD degree or as a postdoctoral researcher.
3. Having a significant academic relationship with the candidate, or in the case of a fellowship applicant, with the future supervisor/host; this includes having jointly published a research paper in the last five years.
4. Being a member of the candidate's department or institution.
5. Having a current or planned close scientific cooperation.
6. Having commercial/financial interests in relation to the candidate/proposal.
7. Having been involved in the preparation of the proposal.
8. Benefitting directly or indirectly from the acceptance or rejection of the proposal/candidate (i.e. direct competition).
9. Being in any other situation that could cast doubt on the evaluator's ability to evaluate the proposal impartially, or that could reasonably appear to do so in the eyes of an external third party.

Annex II: Code of Conduct for EMBO Committees

EMBO is committed to ethical and responsible decision-making, responsible conduct of research and the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA). These principles inform the work of our committees. The guidelines below have been prepared to foster good practice and provide guidance to committee members in exercising their duties.

General guidelines

- **Accountability.** As a committee member, you are required to participate in committee activities in a lawful, ethical and justifiable manner
- **Confidentiality.** All committee-related information and documentation is strictly confidential unless otherwise declared. Confidentiality extends beyond the meeting. As a committee member, please do not speak on behalf of EMBO or the committee about the details or the outcome of selection processes, or comment personally on any decisions made. In particular, please do not divulge any such information to applicants, proposers, or other interested parties.
- **Impartiality and Conflicts of Interest (COI).** As a committee member, you must act in an impartial manner and declare any real, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest as soon as you become aware of them. Please refer to the EMBO COI policy, which is provided to you with the committee guidelines. The committee guidelines also give examples of COI that may occur specifically with respect to the work of your committee.
- **Data protection.** As a committee member, you will be privy to personal information about candidates and nominees. Please be aware of the sensitive character of the data you receive and ensure that you protect them appropriately. You must destroy any personal data provided to you for the purpose of a selection (application and nomination files, including references etc.) within six months after the conclusion of the respective selection procedure.
- **Decision making.** The EMBO Council has delegated decision-making authority to some committees to make decisions on applications or proposals. Any strategic decisions and substantial rule changes remain the prerogative only of the EMBO Council.

Preparation

- **Familiarise yourself with your committee's terms of reference.** Committee terms of reference are described in the committee guidelines. If you have any questions about these, please contact the committee chair or the responsible officer at EMBO.
- **Read the documentation and prepare for decisions** (agenda, minutes from previous meeting, applications etc.) prior to the meeting. Please reserve sufficient time e.g. to score candidates or nominees. If it is your first time on the committee this may take longer than you think. Please ask current or former committee members for advice if in doubt.

- **Submit documentation to the EMBO Office in time.** Any preparatory documentation (e.g. candidate scores) must reach EMBO in time for the office to assemble the necessary tables for discussion and decision at the committee meeting.

During the meeting

- **Attendance.** Committee members should ensure their presence at meetings and attend for the entire duration of the meeting. If it is absolutely necessary to leave early or arrive late please advise the committee chair and the EMBO office, so that agenda items that need your particular input can be moved if possible.
- **No social media posts from the committee meeting.** Please do not divulge information from the meeting, even if it appears innocuous or non-confidential. It is fine to write that you will be attending or did attend, but not about what is being discussed; this is strictly confidential committee business. The EMBO administration may make recordings for the purpose of documentation (e.g. minutes), with the explicit consent of all attendees.
- **Concentrate on the task at hand.** Please do not engage in unrelated work or electronic communication during the meeting, and turn off your mobile phone. Breaks during which you can make phone calls and check emails will be scheduled.
- **Be brief and to the point.**
- **Express your opinion.** You have been recruited to the committee for your expertise and competence. Your opinion is valued, and, in accordance with good scientific practice, should be reasoned.
- **Vote based on your expertise and conclusions.** You are recruited as an individual, not as a representative of a certain group. You may of course bring to the committee the interests or views that you perceive as being held by your community (based on gender, research field, nationality, etc.), but your decisions should be based on the conclusions you have drawn from the information you have been presented with. Please do not take advantage of your membership in the committee for the benefit of a particular group.
- **Consider other committee members' views, but challenge the consensus if necessary.** If you feel that the consensus is based on incomplete or biased views or information, please voice your reservations. Keep in mind that the consensus reached should be in the best interest of the life science community.
- **Respect the selection guidelines and criteria.** Make decisions based on the criteria you are supposed to evaluate, and adhere to the principles outlined in the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), chief among them making assessments based on scientific content rather than publication metrics such as the Journal Impact Factor (JIF). To learn more, visit the [DORA website](#).
- **Recognize (unconscious) biases.** We all have them and need to make a conscious effort to overcome them. As a committee member, please be aware that unconscious biases may affect decision-making (including your own) and please work to avoid them.

After the meeting

- **Feel free to suggest improvements** to the way the committee meeting is being run or conducted. Address either the chair or the officer or both if appropriate with your suggestions and comments. Your suggestions may become an agenda item if raised in time prior to the meeting.