

Committee guidelines

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Young Investigator Programme application deadlines 2026:

Pre-application to the EMBO Young Investigator Programme: 1 April 2026, 12:00 midday CEST

Referee submission of reference letters: 1 April 2026, 12:00 midday CEST

Full application to the EMBO Young Investigator Programme: 15 July 2026, 12:00 midday CEST

Interview in a hybrid format: the committee is on-site in Heidelberg, Germany and interviewees are presenting online. Date: 17 – 18 November 2026

EMBC Member states:

Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye and the United Kingdom

EMBC Associate Member states:

India, Singapore

EMBC Cooperation Agreements:

Chile (executing agency: National Agency for Research and Development of Chile (ANID)).

Japan: For the application round 2026 PIs or Co-PIs funded by the following programmes of the Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST) at the time of the preapplication deadline till January 2027 or beyond are eligible to apply: [ASPIRE](#), [FOREST](#) (in Japanese known as “創発的研究支援事業”), [ERATO](#) (current Research Director or Group Leader), [CREST](#), [PRESTO](#) (in Japanese known as “さきがけ”), [ACT-X](#).

Taiwan (executing agencies: NSTC / Academia Sinica)

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 Young Investigator Programme Committee 2026:

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1. EMBO Young Investigator Programme

The EMBO Young Investigator Programme aims to support future leaders in life science research. Applicants must have been group leaders for more than one, but less than four years at the time of application. Their labs must be located in one of the EMBC Member States, the Associate Member States, or a location covered by a cooperation agreement. Young Investigators receive financial support for networking for four years and benefit from training opportunities, support for their lab members and mentoring. They become part of an international network of more than 800 current and former EMBO Young Investigators, Installation Grantees and Global Investigators.

The EMBO Young Investigator Programme offers:

- An annual meeting and a biennial training week.
- EMBO Young Investigator Programme Lecture: Support for lectures given by EMBO Young Investigators at international meetings.
- Lab management training: Fee waived for programme members attending EMBO Lab Leadership courses.
- Funds to support networking among EMBO Young Investigators and other scientists.
- EMBO mentorship: An EMBO Member chosen by the Young Investigator serves as their mentor. EMBO provides funds towards an annual visit.
- PhD course for the students of the EMBO Young Investigators.
- Access to the EMBL core facilities.
- A financial award of 15,000 euros during the second year.
- Possibility to apply for small grants of up to 10,000 euros.
- Childcare support funds.

Special provision for applications from Taiwan, Chile, India, Singapore, and Japan

Funding for EMBO Young Investigators from India, Singapore and Taiwan is provided through EMBC Associate Member State agreements with the following executing agencies; India (DBT), Singapore (A*STAR) and Taiwan (NSTC / Academia Sinica). Funding for EMBO Young Investigators from Chile and Japan is provided through the cooperation agreement with the following executing agencies; Chile (ANID) and Japan (JST).

2. The EMBO Young Investigator Committee

2.1. Terms of Reference

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

The EMBO Young Investigator Committee is comprised of members with different areas of scientific expertise. Committee members normally serve a four-year term. The Young Investigator Committee suggests replacements for outgoing committee members. The suggested names are submitted to the EMBO Council for appointment. New committee members are invited by the EMBO Young Investigator Programme Office.

The committee selects a chair (normally a current member of the committee with some experience on the 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 are asked to propose a new chairperson in writing. Only proposals received in advance of the committee meeting using the procedure described can be voted upon.

The Young Investigator Committee meets once per year to interview the top candidates and make the final selections. The successful candidates' names remain confidential until approved by the Young Investigator Committee and announced publicly.

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

2.2. Tasks of the EMBO Young Investigator Committee

The EMBO Young Investigator Committee oversees the programme and is responsible for the selection of Young Investigators.

Annually, EMBO receives approximately 200 applications for the EMBO Young Investigator Programme. Each committee member is asked to pre-screen approximately 85 applications and participate in the interviews of approximately 25 candidates during the committee meeting in Heidelberg (held in a hybrid format as of 2020). Final decisions regarding applicant selection are reached during the final discussion at the end of the interviews.

Furthermore, the committee receives an annual report, both written and oral, summarizing the program's activities.

2.3. EMBO Conflict of Interest Policy

Committee members are required to disclose any real or perceived conflicts of interest before participating in the evaluation process. Please take note of the [EMBO Conflict of Interest Policy](#) in [Annex I](#). The following situations are examples of high-level conflicts of interest that would exclude* Young Investigator Committee members from the review process:

Situation	Level of conflict	Consequence
Being an advisor of the applicant	High	Excluded from review process*
Being an active collaborator with 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 with the applicant now or during the previous five years	High	Excluded from review process*
Working in same institution/university	High	Excluded from review process*
Having a financial interest in the application	High	Excluded from review process*

**Cannot be assigned as a reviewer/primary interviewer of the proposal; cannot participate in the discussions related to that specific application, i.e. needs to leave the room while the discussion takes place and cannot be present during the interview. For any questions about a potential conflict of interest, please contact the EMBO Young Investigator Programme Office (yip@embo.org).*

2.4. Code of Conduct

Committee members are expected to comply with the [EMBO Code of Conduct](#) provided in [Annex II](#) before, during, and after the selection meeting.

2.4.1. 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, Code of Conduct for EMBO Committees](#), for further details.

2.4.2. Data protection

Committee members are expected to destroy any data provided to them for the purpose of a selection (application and nomination files, including references, etc.) within six months after the conclusion of the respective selection procedure. Please see [Annex II, Code of Conduct for EMBO Committees](#), for further details.

2.4.3. Artificial Intelligence

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. The EMBO Young Investigator Programme selection procedure

3.1. Overview

Application and selection to the EMBO Young Investigator Programme is a two-step process.

In the first step, applicants submit a short application consisting of their CV, a list of publications, a short summary of their research vision and three letters of reference. Using the eligibility criteria in 3.1.1., all applications are screened by the EMBO Young Investigator Programme Office to check for conflicts of interest, and to ensure that eligibility requirements are met. The committee pre-selects the top 50 eligible candidates.

In the second step, the pre-selected candidates are invited to submit a full application as well as attend an online interview with the committee. The full application is also sent for peer review to an EMBO Member who is an expert in the research area of the applicant to provide an additional view to the committee.

KEY DATES 2026 (Bold text indicates a deadline for committee members)

1 April	Deadline for the Young Investigator Programme pre-application submission
1 May	Young Investigator Programme pre-application files are sent to the pre-screen committee for screening
31 May	Deadline for votes from the pre-screen committee
Mid-June	Full applications invited
15 July	Deadline for full applications submissions
early October	Receipt of complete interview files by committee members
TBC	Committee meeting (online via Zoom)
17 – 18 November	Interviews

3.1.1. Eligibility criteria checked by the EMBO Office

- Applicants should have been an independent group leader for at least one year and less than four years at the pre-application deadline (no earlier than 1 January 2022 and no later than 1 April 2025 for the application round 2026).
- Candidates can re-apply as many times as they fulfil eligibility criteria, but only once more after having been interviewed (i.e. candidates can only attend two interviews).
- Applicants should have an excellent track record, as defined in Section 3.2.1.
- Candidates must do research in the life sciences (see EMBO subject areas on page 2) in a location/programme listed on page 2.
- Medical scientists working in the fields related to the general EMBO subject areas are eligible to apply.
- Applicants are expected to have obtained sufficient funding to run their laboratory (consumables, lab space, salary for themselves and their staff). The Young Investigator Programme funding is not intended to replace core funding.
- Applicants must have at least one last author primary research paper accepted for publication or published in an international peer-reviewed journal from independent work carried out in their own laboratories. EMBO will consider peer-reviewed 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.

Eligibility Extension criteria:

- For candidates who have given birth, the eligibility limit is automatically extended by one year per child.
- For candidates who did not give birth but took parental leave, the eligibility limit may be extended by:
 - the actual time taken off; or
 - three months per child, if during the parental leave period the candidate's partner worked at least 80% FTE (full-time equivalent), whichever is longer.
- Illness, other care responsibilities or extended military service are considered as exceptional circumstances on a case-by-case basis. Special provisions may also be made for clinical scientists.

3.1.2. Application Forms

The application files are made available electronically as PDF.

The **pre-application** consists of:

- CV
- list of publications
- three letters of reference

The full application contains:

- A summary form with:
 - short summary of the research plan
 - a short version of the CV
 - a list of three scientists providing letters of reference
 - a list of lab members
 - a list of funding available to the laboratory
- An application form with:
 - CV
 - publication list
 - details of the applicant's three best papers
 - a two-page description of the applicant's research vision
- A short description of the host institute's facilities relevant to the candidate's research.
- Three letters of reference.

3.2. First step of the evaluation procedure: Pre-screening

Candidates applying to the EMBO Young Investigator Programme are first pre-screened by the committee to identify the strongest applications, which allows more time to identify the top scientists to be invited for an interview. The aim of the pre-screen procedure is to select about 50 candidates who should be interviewed.

Committee members are sent the list of applicants and are asked to declare any perceived or real conflicts of interest regarding any of the candidates (see Annex I, [EMBO Conflict of Interest Policy](#), for further details).

Each member of the pre-screen committee receives about 85 applications. Each application is scored by four committee members.

The pre-screen committee consists of current and outgoing committee members. The 2026 pre-screen committee members are Giles Oldroyd, Corinne Houart, Urs Jenal, Gaëlle Legube, Jan Löwe, Jean-Christophe Marine, Eric Miska, Jacques Neefjes, Nina Papavasiliou, Irmgard Sinning, and Sara Wickström.

3.2.1. Evaluation criteria for the pre-screening

The following aspects of each application should be evaluated:

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 areas 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?

3.2.2. Scoring system

Applications should be graded using the evaluation criteria as follows:

- **5. Outstanding:** A highly mature and independent scientist; a demonstrable leader in their field and related areas; clearly original in thinking, with a compelling and ambitious research vision.
- **4. Excellent:** A mature and independent scientist; clear evidence of leadership within their field; strong indications of original thinking and a well-defined research vision.
- **3. Very good:** Evidence of emerging scientific maturity and leadership; some indications of original thinking and an emerging research vision.
- **2. Good:** Limited evidence of scientific maturity and leadership; originality and research vision are not yet sufficiently developed.
- **1. Non-competitive:** Insufficient scientific maturity and leadership; lacks originality and a coherent research vision.

Scores are expected to be returned to the EMBO Young Investigator Programme Office by **31 May 2026**.

Based on the pre-screen scores, and in consultation with the committee chair, the EMBO Young Investigator Programme Office draws up a list of the approximately 50 candidates who will be invited to submit a full application and to the interview.

Applicants are informed of the results of the pre-screen by mid-June.

3.3. Second step of the evaluation procedure: External assessment and interviews by the Young Investigator Programme Committee

3.3.1. External assessment

The full applications of the pre-selected candidates are sent to an EMBO Member with expertise in the applicant's area of research to provide a written confidential assessment. This assessment focuses on the candidates' **standing in the field and the feasibility of their proposed work**. EMBO Young Investigator Programme aims to find prospective future leaders in their field. Both EMBO Members and external reviewers are asked to declare any conflict of interest. Candidates can exclude up to three specific EMBO Members from the process.

3.3.2. Assignment to committee members

The committee is divided into two sub-committees. Each sub-committee interviews around 25 candidates. Ahead of the meeting, the EMBO Young Investigator Programme Office sends each sub-committee a list of candidates to interview. Conflicts of interest regarding particular candidates should be declared prior to the final assignments (see Annex I, [EMBO Conflict of Interest Policy](#), for further details). Committee members receive the full applications with the reviewer's reports. Each committee member is assigned as a primary interviewer to four or five applicants and should score the applications assigned to them (the scores are not communicated with the EMBO Young Investigator Programme Office). As primary

interviewers, they will lead the discussion with and on the candidate, i.e., starting and moderating the questions, making sure that questions regarding the independence of the candidate, and other issues, are satisfactorily explored during the interview.

3.3.3. Committee meeting and Young Investigator Programme interviews

The committee meeting takes place online, usually 1 – 2 weeks prior to the interviews.

The two full days of 17 and 18 November are dedicated to the interviews of the applicants to the EMBO Young Investigator Programme. The interviews take place in a hybrid format, with the committee members present on-site, and candidates present remotely.

Interviews are held by two sub-committees 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 interviewed that day.

3.3.4. Evaluation criteria

Committee members are reminded that the candidate is not applying for a research grant. Instead, the potential to become a future leader in research is being evaluated.

The following aspects of each application should be evaluated:

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: Has the applicant shown a willingness to change research areas 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

- Group size and funding sources: Are the number and the expertise of laboratory members and the available funds sufficient to undertake the described research?
- Host institute: Is the research environment conducive to competitive research?

INDEPENDENCE

Criteria for evaluating the candidate's independence

Operational independence:

- Is the candidate financially independent? Is the candidate able to apply for grants in their own name and report directly to funding agencies?
- Is the candidate able to submit manuscripts as the last author ("corresponding author" is not necessarily considered equivalent to "last author")?
- Is the candidate responsible for supervising graduate students and/or postdocs in their own lab?

Intellectual independence:

- What is the influence of former supervisors and institute/department heads on the candidate's current research?

Committee members should also bear 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-based metrics in their publication list.

3.3.5. Final decision

The sub-committees must finalize the ranking of the candidates at the end of each day, as the composition of the sub-committees changes each day.

On the evening of the second interview day, the committee convenes to compare and discuss all the rankings, ultimately making the final decision on candidate selection. Following the selection decision, an additional 1.5 hours is allocated for providing feedback to unsuccessful candidates. This feedback is sent to the candidates by the EMBO Young Investigator Programme Office.

4. 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 evaluator commits 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 Young Investigator Programme 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:

- Having a personal relationship with the candidate or proposer, or, in the case of a fellowship applicant, with the future supervisor/host.
- Having supervised the candidate for a PhD degree or as a postdoctoral researcher.
- 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.
- Being a member of the candidate's department or institution.
- Having a current or planned close scientific cooperation.
- Having commercial/financial interests in relation to the candidate/proposal.
- Having been involved in the preparation of the proposal.
- Benefitting directly or indirectly from the acceptance or rejection of the proposal/candidate (i.e. direct competition).
- 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.

5. 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 are 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 Young Investigator Programme 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 necessary to leave early or arrive late, please advise the committee chair and the EMBO Young Investigator Programme 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 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.