

Survey summary report

Survey conducted in autumn 2025 | 280 responses across four programme cohorts

Findings from current and former EMBO Young Investigators, EMBO Installation Grantees and EMBO Global Investigators, with proposed follow-up actions.

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1. Executive summary

The 2025 EMBO Young Investigator Network survey provides a strong endorsement of the network and its constituent programmes. Across **280** responses from current and former Young Investigators, Installation Grantees and Global Investigators, respondents consistently described the programme as a source of recognition, high-quality peer connections, professional development and practical support for both principal investigators and their research groups.

Key findings

- **91%** of respondents reported that their expectations had been fully met or exceeded, ranging from **85%** of current Young Investigators to **95%** of Global Investigators.
- The selection process was viewed as fair and transparent: around **80%** of Young Investigator and Installation Grantee respondents and **95%** of Global Investigator respondents rated it excellent or very good. More than **90%** rated the interview experience positively.
- The most valued benefits were lab retreats, institute visits and seminars, meeting participation grants and support for organizing meetings. Professional development training was particularly important to Installation Grantees.
- Annual meetings and retreats (i.e. professional training week) were rated very highly for both scientific quality and networking. Among retreat participants, **91%** rated the content as highly relevant for group leaders and **94%** would recommend attendance.
- The Young Investigator Network office received near-unanimous praise for responsiveness, helpfulness, clarity and low administrative burden relative to other funding schemes.
- While close to **90%** of all respondents rated the simplicity of the benefit applications and the ease of the reimbursement process as excellent or very good, a small number of respondents suggested to simplify access to benefits and reimbursements, reduce fragmented applications for small amounts, and make funds available earlier and more flexibly.

Headline indicators

Indicator	Result	Interpretation
Overall response	280 / 849 (33.0%)	Substantial evidence base, with response rates varying by cohort.

Indicator	Result	Interpretation
Expectations met or exceeded	91%	A consistently positive assessment across all respondent groups.
Annual meeting quality and networking	~95%	Excellent or very good ratings across cohorts.
Retreat relevance	>90%	Excellent or very good among participants.
Tangible benefits	~99%	Only around 1% reported no tangible benefit.
Network size	~80%	Respondents generally considered the current size appropriate.

Main implications

- Protect the elements that respondents regard as distinctive: peer networking, scientific exchange, leadership training, support for lab members and responsive programme administration.
- Respondents commended the recent improvements to the benefit application procedures. Some respondents suggested to simplify the funding architecture. An annual flexible allocation or lump-sum model would address repeated concerns about multiple small applications, reimbursement delays and the need to advance personal or institutional funds.
- Plan meetings earlier and review their formats. Respondents asked for earlier notice, to ensure broader access to annual meeting and retreats. Although ratings were high, the annual meeting attracted the most suggestions for change, reflecting the different priorities of the three groups
- Strengthen mentoring, interdisciplinarity and links across EMBO communities, including stronger interaction with EMBO Members and clearer pathways for continued engagement after programme membership, e.g. becoming an EMBO Member.
- Improve visibility and communication around underused opportunities, particularly Young Investigator and Global Investigator Lectures, recruitment support and channels for informal networking.

Interpretation

The findings should be read in light of differing cohort structures and benefit availability over time. Participation opportunities were also disrupted for members whose programme years overlapped with the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly during 2020–2022. Many benefits were not yet available for the earlier cohorts.

2. Methodology and respondent profile

The survey was conducted in autumn 2025 and combined quantitative ratings with open-ended comments. It invited four cohorts of faculty-level researchers who differ primarily in institutional context, geography and career stage. In total, **280** responses were collected and analysed.

Respondent profile

Cohort	Starting years	Invited	Responses	Response rate
Current Young Investigators	2021–2025	157	73	46.5%
Former Young Investigators	2001–2020	457	100	21.9%
Installation Grantees	From 2005	170	66	38.8%
Global Investigators	From 2020	65	41	63.1%
Total	-	849	280	33.0%

The Installation Grantee cohort included grantees funded through an HHMI grant to EMBO.

Notably, the programme serves members at different career stages with distinct needs. All three groups are independent group leaders, but they differ in institutional setting and programme structure. Installation Grantees (–1 to +4 years of starting their group) are often at institutions in countries building research capacity, where EMBO support is comparatively more impactful. Young Investigators (within the first four years) tend to be at well-resourced European institutes. Global Investigators are independent group leaders (within the first six years) based in the four EMBO Global Partners (Chile, India, Singapore, Taiwan). They share faculty status with Young Investigators and Installation Grantees but operate in a distinct geographic context: laboratories outside Europe, at institutions building research capacity, often without direct access to European conference circuits and funding structures.

Questions covered motivation to apply, the selection process, programme benefits, networking, training, programme administration, perceived outcomes as well as an invitation to suggest improvements via open ended comments. Open-ended responses were reviewed thematically, and selected comments are included as illustrative quotations. Quotations have been lightly edited for grammar, punctuation and length while preserving their meaning.

Points to consider when interpreting the findings

- Response rates differed by cohort, ranging from **21.9%** among former Young Investigators to **63.1%** among Global Investigators.
- Not every benefit was available to every cohort or throughout the full period covered by the survey; comparisons should therefore be made cautiously.
- Open-ended comments provide depth and context but should not be interpreted as prevalence estimates unless a frequency or percentage is explicitly reported.
- The COVID-19 pandemic affected participation in meetings and other in-person activities for cohorts active during 2020–2022.

3. Survey findings

The findings below combine the quantitative results reported in the survey summary with the main themes emerging from respondents' comments. Quotations are used to illustrate the range and tone of the feedback.

3.1. How respondents learned about the programme

Personal recommendation was the dominant route into the programme for Young Investigators and Installation Grantees. Respondents most often heard about the opportunity from a colleague (**39 to 59%** across cohorts), and next most often from a current or former programme member or an EMBO Member, reinforcing the importance of the existing scientific community as an informal referral network.

At least **12%** of Young Investigators also reported learning about the programme at a conference. It is possible that Young Investigator Lectures contributed to this visibility, although the survey data, at this time, cannot establish this route. Social media played a more prominent role for Global Investigators: **29.3%** reported learning about the programme through social media, compared with no more than **5.5%** among Young Investigators and Installation Grantees.

Several respondents commented that the programme is already widely recognized within their scientific communities.

3.2. Motivation to apply

The principal motivation for applying was the opportunity to build a network with other early-career group leaders. Career development and the prestige associated with being selected were also major drivers. Between **63** and **73%** of respondents were motivated by access to training opportunities.

International collaboration was particularly important to Global Investigators: **88%** cited it as a motivation, compared with **65%** of Installation Grantees, **46%** of former Young Investigators and **36%** of current Young Investigators. This pattern suggests that the programme may play a

particularly important role in connecting researchers whose institutional or geographic environment provides fewer established international links. This interpretation is plausible but was not tested directly in the survey.

3.3. Expectations of membership

Overall, **91%** stated that their expectations had either been fully met or exceeded: **85%** of current Young Investigators, **94%** of former Young Investigators, **91%** of Installation Grantees and **95%** of Global Investigators. Current Young Investigators whose membership overlapped with the pandemic noted that restrictions had limited their ability to realize the programme's full networking potential.

"Membership of the EMBO Young Investigator Programme has been the single most positive factor in my career as an independent group leader."

— Former Young Investigator respondent

"I did not expect that I would benefit from the programme so much – especially the cross-disciplinary networking, the boost of new ideas, the exchange of resources between grantees and the excellent peer support and mentoring."

— Installation Grantee

Critical comments focused mainly on financial support, including the amount provided in the Young Investigator award and the loss of small-grant opportunities in recent years.

Global Investigators positively highlighted the international visibility and networking opportunities provided by the programme.

3.4. Selection process

Process overview

The selection process comprises an eligibility review, followed by pre-screening by the committee and an interview for those who passed the pre-screen. Applications are submitted in late April to early May each year. The office reviews candidate eligibility then provides the committee with all eligible applications for pre-screening. Around 50 Young Investigator, 20 Installation Grant and 20 Global Investigator candidates are invited to interview in October–November. Once selected for interview, invited candidate files candidates are sent to an EMBO Member with relevant scientific expertise for written review.

Each candidate is interviewed by a panel of 5 committee members, with one of those members serving as the primary reviewer. The 30-minute interview consists of a ten-minute presentation, ten minutes of questions then ten minutes of committee-only discussion and scoring. Once all interviews have been conducted, candidates are ranked and discussed before final selections are made.

Fairness, transparency and interview experience

Around **80%** of Young Investigator and Installation Grantee respondents rated the fairness and transparency of the process as excellent or very good; approximately **10%** felt unable to assess it. Among Global Investigator respondents, **95%** rated the process excellent or very good.

Among current Young Investigators, Installation Grantees and Global Investigators, **92 to 98%** rated the interview experience as excellent or very good. Among former Young Investigators the figure is **82%** of all respondents, or **94%** of those who felt able to assess it. It is to be noted that the committee interview was only introduced in 2011. Prior to 2011, candidates were interviewed by an EMBO Member expert in their research area and the committee made the selections based on the written documentation received.

Positive comments referred to clear preparation guidance, a friendly atmosphere and scientifically grounded questions. The main criticism was the limited time available for the presentation and questions.

“The committee reviewed my application thoroughly, including my CV and proposed projects, and maintained a professional approach in all interactions. Overall, they were experienced and knowledgeable in my field and conducted the interview with rigour while remaining professional.”

— Global Investigator

Application guidelines and eligibility requirements were regarded as very clear by **96%** of current Young Investigator and **95%** of Global Investigator respondents, and by **85%** of former Young Investigator respondents. Among Installation Grantee respondents, **15%** described them as only somewhat clear, particularly in relation to the institutional support form.

3.5. Benefits: importance and use

Across the three programme groups, the benefits most often rated as essential or very important were lab retreats, institute visits and seminars, meeting participation grants and support for organizing meetings. More than **70%** of current Young Investigators and Global Investigators rated these benefits highly; the figures are lower for former Young Investigators (**49 to 62%**) and Installation Grantees (**52 to 69%**). Historical comparisons require caution because some benefits were not available to former Young Investigators or to former Installation Grantee cohorts.

Professional development training was the highest-rated benefit for Installation Grantees, with **75%** rating it essential or very important. Global Investigators placed particular value on benefits that enabled scientific mobility and visibility, including lab visiting fellowships, institute visits and seminars, meeting participation grants and coverage of EMBO Press publication fees.

Childcare grants attracted some of the strongest positive comments. They were rated essential or very important by **56%** of current Young Investigators, compared with **38%** of former Young Investigators, **36%** of Global Investigators and **25%** of Installation Grantees, but the survey does not establish whether this reflects differences in need, i.e. age of children or caring responsibilities, awareness, eligibility or local context.

The combination of benefits that EMBO Young Investigator Network offers are unique, although some may be available to individuals via other funding sources (institutional, grants or other organizations).

"I cannot stress enough how helpful the childcare support has been. It has allowed me to attend multiple conferences that overlap with school or daycare closures; please keep offering it."

— Young Investigator

3.6. Annual meeting: networking and scientific value

90% of former Young Investigators and **94%** of Installation Grantees had attended at least one annual meeting. Non-attendance was more common among current Young Investigators (**46%**) and Global Investigators (**29%**), largely because they had been recently selected or faced clashes with childcare, teaching or other commitments. Among former Young Investigator respondents, **43%** had attended three or more annual meetings, while **10%** had attended none.

Close to or above **90%** of all cohorts rated the scientific quality of presentations and the networking opportunities as excellent or very good. More than **80%** considered the meeting an excellent or very good opportunity to learn about scientific developments within or beyond their own fields.

Some respondents perceived variation in presentation quality and differing expectations of the meeting. Some wanted more high-level peer-to-peer exchange; others, particularly Installation Grantees, placed more weight on professional development, equal treatment and geographic inclusion. Global Investigators were most satisfied with the current format. Some regarded this diversity as a strength of the network; others suggested adjustments to the annual meeting format.

“Just hearing great research – and discussing it – across a wide range of topics enhances your thinking and broadens your vision.”

— Young Investigator

“I met brilliant, inspiring and creative scientists. These interactions were important for my development, led to new projects and ideas, provided mentor advice and peer support and strengthened my confidence and critical thinking.”

— Installation Grantee

Suggestions for the annual meeting format

- Introduce scientific themes or topical tracks to support more focused interactions.
- Consider parallel sessions or poster sessions to reduce the density of scientific talks and give more participants an opportunity to present.
- Review the overall frequency of Young Investigator Network meetings and conferences; one respondent suggested holding the meeting every two years.

3.7. Retreats: relevance and quality

EMBO Young Investigator Network introduced biennial retreats in 2018. With the 2020 retreat cancelled because of COVID-19, only three retreats had taken place at the time of the survey. The week-long format focuses on training relevant to group leaders, and the office has varied the topics and trainers as the format has developed.

Overall, most respondents had not attended a retreat, although the proportion varied by cohort: **76%** of current Young Investigators, **65%** of Global Investigators, **61%** of former Young Investigators and **46%** of Installation Grantees. The reasons given were most often that respondents were new to the programme, or that childcare, conference schedules or scientific commitments got in the way. Among those who had attended, however, **91%** rated the content as excellent or very good for its relevance to group leaders, and **94%** would recommend the retreat to others.

No Installation Grantee or Global Investigator respondent reported access to comparable training elsewhere. **17%** of Young Investigators said that similar courses were available to them, although comments emphasized that the quality and in-person format of the EMBO courses were often superior.

Respondents suggested to consider adding training in AI tools to help day to day work as a PI and training for public outreach.

“The retreats are where I do almost all of my soft-skills training, network in a pleasant environment, start collaborations and learn about new opportunities. Being able to focus entirely on networking and development is a very effective alternative to a traditional scientific course.”

— Installation Grantee

“It is not simply about whether courses are available elsewhere; the quality is mostly below that of the courses EMBO offers.”

— Young Investigator

3.8. EMBO Lab Leadership Course

The EMBO Lab Leadership Courses were developed for EMBO Young Investigators in 2005 and opened to all group leaders in 2007. Since 2010, they have been delivered by EMBO Solutions, a not-for-profit subsidiary of EMBO.

Among current and former Young Investigator respondents, **65%** had attended the course; a further **20%** of current Young Investigators planned to attend. Attendance was **73%** among Installation Grantees, with another **15%** intending to participate. Among Global Investigators, **39%** had attended and **44%** planned to do so. Those with no intention of attending generally considered themselves too senior or had completed similar training previously, sometimes as postdoctoral researchers funded by EMBO.

“Management is a skill that needs to be learned. It was an excellent experience, and ever since I have sent many of my postdoctoral researchers – and later junior group leaders – to this course.”

— Former Young Investigator

3.9. Young Investigator and Global Investigator Lectures

EMBO sponsors lectures by current Young Investigators and Global Investigators at international conferences. There is not currently a lecture funding mechanism for Installation Grantees.

78% of current Young Investigators and **83%** of former Young Investigators had delivered at least one Young Investigator Lecture. **64%** of Global Investigators had delivered a lecture, the number is lower than for the Young Investigators, since the Global Lectures are only available since 2023. Among those who felt able to assess it, the exposure was rated extremely or very beneficial by **85%** of current and **75%** of former Young Investigators; and **70%** of Global Investigators.

“It definitely helped me get onto conference programmes, and I now look for Young Investigators when I organize conferences myself.”

— Former Young Investigator

“Getting invited to conferences is expected in our tenure evaluation and is an obvious challenge for junior faculty, especially when travel is expensive. The Global Investigator Lecture and invited seminar options are invaluable exposure at my current career stage.”

— Global Investigator

3.10. Outcomes of programme membership

For current and former Young Investigators, the most frequently reported outcomes were enhanced recognition and meaningful professional connections, each mentioned by more than **80%** of respondents. Respondents linked recognition to additional grants and other career opportunities. Multiple lab benefits were reported by **52%** of current and **39%** of former Young Investigators; professional training by **60%** of former and **42%** of current Young Investigators.

Around **40%** of former Young Investigators valued peer advice and collaborations, whether within their own field or across disciplines. Current Young Investigators were more likely to say that they had not yet been in the programme long enough to assess these longer-term outcomes. **28%** of current Young Investigators reported that childcare support had increased their ability to travel.

Close to **80%** of Installation Grantees valued the professional training they received, compared with **65%** of Global Investigators, **60%** of former Young Investigators and **42%** of current Young Investigators. This may reflect differences in career stage and in access to comparable training. Mentoring relationships were mentioned by between **11 and 31%** of respondents, depending on cohort.

Only around **1%** of respondents across all cohorts reported no tangible benefit from membership.

Global Investigators reported the highest satisfaction of any group in the survey. **95%** report that the programme either fully met (**54%**) or exceeded (**41%**) their initial expectations; none reported that it did not meet expectations. Qualitative comments are consistently superlative: "the programme is just the best", "phenomenal" and "nothing but exceptional". One possible explanation, not tested in the survey, is that the programme provides access to European networks that are otherwise harder to reach from Global Partners.

Three themes drive Global Investigator satisfaction. First, EMBO expands international reach that would otherwise be costly to build from Global Partners. Second, membership in an EMBO programme provides a recognized and prestigious signal that strengthens grant applications and tenure evaluations at institutions in Global Partners. Third, the EMBO Global Activities

office earns extraordinary praise — helpfulness was rated Excellent by **100%** of Global Investigator respondents, the highest score on any metric across all groups in the survey.

“The Young Investigator Programme benefits are unique and extremely valuable – one of the greatest assets EMBO has.”

— Young Investigator

“Feeling part of the family gave me self-confidence, especially during the toughest period after having a baby.”

— Young Investigator

“After a postdoctoral position in the USA, I did not know many people in Europe. The EMBO Young Investigator Programme helped expand my network and gave me recognition early in my independent career.”

— Young Investigator

3.11. Benefits for lab members

Several programme benefits directly support lab members, including travel to meetings, research visits and training through the EMBO Young Investigator Network PhD course. **88%** of current Young Investigators and **91%** of Installation Grantees considered these benefits essential or very important, as did **75%** of former Young Investigators. Among Global Investigators, **73%** rated them essential and **27%** very important, indicating uniformly high value in that cohort.

“I have been able to give my PhD students opportunities to travel abroad for conferences and research stays that I did not have when I was a PhD student.”

— Global Investigator

“The meeting participation grant enabled me to support PhD students in attending conferences and courses, enhancing their skills, scientific exposure and doctoral experience.”

— Installation Grantee

“My team was highly appreciative of the travel funds and they have the highest estimation of EMBO, as a result.”

— Young Investigator

Other comments highlighted the value of lab visiting fellowships, travel funds for students who have no access to dedicated budgets and support offered for scientists from Ukraine.

3.12. Newsletter and communication

The Young Investigator Network office sends a newsletter every two months to current and former Young Investigators, Installation Grantees and Global Investigators. **90%** of respondents found this communication channel moderately to extremely useful, and more than **90%** read it regularly or occasionally.

Respondents valued the newsletter as a way to learn about sectoral meetings, annual meetings and other opportunities. Suggestions included shortening the newsletter so it could be read within the email itself and adding a more interactive networking channel, such as Slack or a comparable platform.

“This is how I become familiar with the sectoral and annual meetings taking place during the year.”

— Global Investigator

3.13. Interactions with the Young Investigator Network office and administration

Feedback on the Young Investigator Network office was exceptionally positive. Close to **100%** of respondents rated responsiveness, response quality, helpfulness and support as excellent or very good, with the large majority selecting excellent.

“The team has always been a trailblazer for excellent scientific administration – quick, responsive, efficient, friendly, innovative, thoughtful and rigorous.”

— Young Investigator

“The EMBO Young Investigator Network office has always been very supportive while trying to minimize the administrative burden on scientists. It is the best funding or support programme I know in terms of administrative burden.”

— Installation Grantee

More than **90%** rated the benefit guidelines excellent or very good. Respondents also praised the simplicity of the benefit application process and the reimbursement procedure, i.e. close to **90%** of all respondents rated the simplicity of the benefit applications and the ease of the reimbursement process as excellent or very good. Improvements due to the introduction of online forms was noted.

At the same time, some respondents asked for further simplification. The principal concerns were the effort required for multiple small applications and reports, the need to apply before an activity and reimbursement timelines that can require PIs or lab members to advance substantial sums for several months. This also raises an issue about equity, especially for labs in lower-salary countries and for junior lab members.

“For the small sums involved, the work required for individual applications and reimbursements is substantial. I would favour either fewer funding categories with a larger lump sum, or one annual application and an end-of-year report.”

— Young Investigator

“The reimbursement model assumes that a fellow, student or postdoctoral researcher has money available to advance. In many cases I covered thousands of euros myself so that group members would not have to wait months for reimbursement.”

— Young Investigator

3.14. Networking beyond Europe

Since 2011, EMBO and EMBC have had Global Partners beyond Europe, including Chile, India, Singapore and Taiwan. Scientists in these countries can apply to all EMBO programmes, with the exception of Installation Grants. The EMBO Global Investigator Network was launched in 2019 and integrated into the Young Investigator Network; from 2023 it operated at a steady state of 40 active members.

Questions in this category were only asked to Young Investigators and Installation Grantees. Among current Young Investigator respondents, **32%** had made contacts with scientists in the four partner countries through the programme. Slightly more than **10%** already had contacts there, while close to **60%** were interested in building them.

Reported outcomes included access to useful data and collaborations (**27%** of current and **34%** of former Young Investigators, **16%** of Installation Grantees), contacts leading to recruitment or joint applications (**4 to 24%**) and broader perspectives through cross-cultural exchange. Around **43%** had not yet had such interactions. Installation Grantees generally reported a lower level of engagement, but potential reasons remain unexplored

“I was fortunate to be part of the delegation to India and it brought many benefits: several collaborations, postdoctoral recruits and invitations for talks and sabbaticals.”

— Installation Grantee

When asked whether EMBO should continue dedicated support for global interactions, **56%** of current and **53%** of former Young Investigators and **62%** of Installation Grantees considered them important; **10 to 16%** said that they had already helped create valuable contacts. Between **4 and 10%** preferred EMBO to focus exclusively on Europe.

Range Of Views

Comments reflected a genuine strategic tension. Some respondents emphasized the scientific and recruitment benefits of global links, while others argued that limited resources should focus on strengthening European networks, particularly connections between Western Europe and research communities in Eastern and Southern Europe.

It needs to be made clear to all that Global Partners fully cover the funding for activities involving Global Investigators, including the costs for the dedicated Global office.

“The main thing is to bring the broad Young Investigator community together. Contacts and interactions then happen organically; the role of the programme is to give people the tools to build things themselves.”

— Young Investigator

“Interactions are primarily driven by the science, not by institutional partnerships.”

— Young Investigator

Global Investigators were asked a similar set of questions. Responses consistently described EMBO as an important connection between their laboratories and the European research community, supporting access to conferences, collaborations, recognition and opportunities for their students and postdocs. A theme that emerges exclusively from Global Investigator responses, and which cuts across every section of their survey feedback, is what might be called the Global Bridge Effect: for researchers in Chile, India, Singapore and Taiwan, EMBO functions as an important institutional connection between their laboratories and the European research ecosystem. This is an important pathway through which they access European conferences, build collaborations with European laboratories, achieve the international recognition that strengthens tenure cases and grant applications at home, and provide their students and postdoctoral researchers with opportunities unavailable locally.

74% of the Global Investigator respondents stated that they had made professional contact in Europe via the programme and **97%** were interested in building further contacts. Of those who have made connections **78%** stated that this has provided them with access to useful data, collaborations or scientific insights; **30%** made connections that led to recruitment or joint applications and **54%** gained a broader perspective through cross-cultural exchange.

Between **82 and 92%** of Global Investigator respondents agree that the EMBO Global Investigator Network has connected the local EMBO community in Global Partners (**92%**), built networks beyond it (**82%**) and created continental networks (**87%**).

Over **90%** think that EMBO activities (not restricted to the Young Investigator Network) have significant (**56%**) to moderate (**36%**) impact on the broader scientific community in their countries.

Awareness of EMBO activities in the local broader community in Global Partners ranges from very aware (**46%**) to somewhat aware (**51%**).

3.15. Size and scope of the network

Close to **80%** of respondents felt that the size and scope of the EMBO Young Investigator Network were about right. Only a small proportion of Young Investigators considered it either too large or capable of accommodating more members. **13%** of Installation Grantees believed that membership could be expanded.

“The programme is selective enough to create a strong group of inspiring early-career scientists.”

— Young Investigator

3.16. Suggestions for improvement

Respondents generated a wide range of proposals. The table below consolidates the recurring themes while retaining the specific ideas raised in the survey.

Theme	Suggestions raised by respondents
Activities for PhD students and postdoctoral researchers	Create a symposium for PhD students from Young Investigator Network labs. Consider a postdoctoral workshop/retreat similar to the Young Investigator Network model.

Theme	Suggestions raised by respondents
Training and public engagement	Offer focused training in new technologies and methods, including efficient usage of AI technologies, in person or online. Provide training on policy engagement and communicating science to society. Support public outreach through small incentives and practical resources. Review how leadership training translates across different cultural and institutional contexts.
Small grants and flexible funding	Reintroduce small grants or small joint grants to seed new projects and collaborations. Offer short bridging grants, for example to complete a PhD project or test a new idea. Increase or broaden support for lab retreats, lectures, seminars and conference organization. Consider extending childcare support to group members where appropriate.
Networking formats	Allow reciprocal short-term fellowship support so programme members can both send and host researchers. Pilot small, informal online mini-symposia on topical research in a trusted peer setting. Strengthen interdisciplinarity and links across established scientific communities.
Retreats and meetings	Offer retreats more often, at different times of year in shorter formats. Consider adding short scientific talks to retreats alongside professional development training. Announce programme-organized meetings earlier, ideally about one year in advance. Review the annual meeting structure, including topical themes, posters, parallel streams or a biennial format.
Mentoring and sectoral meetings	Expand mentoring and consider a default mentor match for every grantee. Continue support for sectoral meetings while reviewing cost, access and repeated participation by the same groups.

Theme	Suggestions raised by respondents
EMBO community and membership	Create more opportunities for interaction between programme members and EMBO Members, including national gatherings. Clarify routes to EMBO Membership and consider whether programme alumni could be considered via a more structured nomination pathway. Maintain meaningful engagement for alumni after active membership ends.
Recruitment and visibility	Re-establish support for advertising open positions and explore links to high-quality EMBL PhD or postdoctoral candidate pools. Promote Young Investigator and Global Investigator Lecture opportunities more actively. Add an interactive networking channel alongside the newsletter.
Global Investigator Network funding	Review the EUR 1,800 meeting participation limit in light of intercontinental travel costs. Consider allowing unused networking funds to roll over between years. Provide conference-organization support in addition to the annual networking grant.
Administration and possible reductions	Reduce the number of small funding categories, applications and reports. Consider to remove manuscript editing support as this may become less important as curated AI tools develop. Review the duration of financial support for former Young Investigators.
Inclusion and programme stewardship	Report on long-term progress in gender balance and assess whether further action is required. Protect continuity and capacity in the Young Investigator Network team, which respondents regarded as central to programme quality. Communicate clearly that Global Investigator Network activities are financed by participating countries rather than diverting European resources.

Overall sentiment

"Thank you for running this programme and please keep funding it. It made a huge difference to my career and to my understanding of a good research culture. It was key to being both a working mother and a successful group leader."

— Young Investigator

"The programme brings together an excellent group of people in a friendly and sharing atmosphere. That is what science should look like."

— Young Investigator

"The organization of the programme has been fantastic during the time of my tenure. Loved every aspect of it – the support, personal replies, easy refunding scheme and professional handling of requests!"

— Young Investigator

The term "Young Investigator"

Current and former Young Investigators were asked if the term "young investigator" is still appropriate for the target group.

Some current and former members felt that the term implies age rather than career stage, which may not suit members who start their groups later, for example after career breaks. Former Young Investigators feel the issue more acutely, having aged out of fitting the label while remaining in the network.

Among Young Investigator respondents, **77%** liked the current name. A further **9%** did not like it but did not consider a change necessary, while **11%** felt that the name should be changed.

The main argument for retaining the name was its established brand recognition. Concerns focused on the implication of age rather than career stage. Alternatives proposed by respondents included "New Investigator", "Early Career Investigator", "Junior Investigator" and "Rising Stars". A member-driven naming exercise was suggested.

"The programme is now so well known that it is probably much better to keep the name."

— Young Investigator

"The name has recognition value, but not all of us are equally "young" rather than early career."

— Young Investigator

4. Actions following from the survey

The survey confirms that the core programme model is working well: selection is regarded as fair and professional, expectations are met, the benefits and networking opportunities are considered distinctive, the training is valued and the team delivering the programme is exceptionally well regarded. Follow-up should therefore focus on preserving these strengths while addressing recurring operational and strategic concerns.

Recommended follow-up framework

Theme	Proposed follow-up	Survey rationale
Funding and administration	Assess an annual lump-sum or flexible-allocation model for active programme members; reduce the number of separate applications and reports; review options for advances or earlier reimbursement.	Most consistent operational criticism; addresses both administrative effort and unequal ability to advance funds.
Exchange funding	Continue loosening restrictions so funds can support both outgoing and incoming exchanges, with fewer category-specific limits.	Respondents want reciprocal mobility and more flexible use of networking funds.
Small grants	Explore reinstating small grants, collaboration seed grants and limited bridging support through a proportionate application process.	Repeated request linked to starting new ideas, collaborations and completing projects.
Meetings and retreats	Publish dates earlier; review annual meeting structure; assess retreat frequency, timing and scientific content; streamline sectoral meetings.	Scheduling conflicts and format concerns were the most common event-related issues.

Theme	Proposed follow-up	Survey rationale
Mentoring and networking	Increase participation in the mentorship platform (e.g. add methods expertise) and pilot topical, small-group networking formats, including renewed e-talks or mini-symposia.	Mentorship use remains uneven, and respondents requested more active cross-field interaction.
Communication	Create an interactive networking channel, shorten or optimize the newsletter and include EMBO relevant information. Improve promotion of Young Investigator and Global Investigator Lectures.	The newsletter is valued, but respondents asked for more immediate peer interaction.
EMBO-wide connections	Work with the Membership and Fellowship offices on joint meetings, alumni engagement, postdoctoral activities and clearer membership nomination information. List EMBO related information in the newsletter	Respondents want stronger links to EMBO Members and continued engagement beyond the active programme period.
Recruitment support	Assess re-establishing a job-posting platform on the EMBO website and links to relevant EMBO/EMBL candidate pools.	Recruitment of strong postdoctoral researchers was identified as a persistent challenge.
Training and outreach	Develop training in emerging technologies, policy engagement and public outreach; review cultural adaptability of leadership training.	Respondents value EMBO training quality, but proposed possible additional topics.
Equity and strategic communication	Report long-term gender-balance trends; clarify the funding basis of the Global Investigator Network; communicate how global and European priorities fit within the network strategy.	Respondents requested evidence on inclusion and expressed divergent views on the geographic scope of EMBO activity.

Theme	Proposed follow-up	Survey rationale
Team continuity	Protect the expertise, responsiveness and continuity of the Young Investigator Network office.	The team was repeatedly identified as crucial to programme quality and low administrative burden.

Conclusion

The results indicate that EMBO Young Investigator Network is delivering substantial value at a formative stage of researchers' independent careers. Its strongest assets are not limited to individual financial benefits: respondents repeatedly emphasized recognition, belonging, trusted peer relationships, high-quality training and unusually responsive administration. The central task following the survey is therefore to preserve this culture while making access to support more flexible, timely and administratively proportionate.