

Call for applications 13 April 2015

Helmholtz Postdoc Programme

A. Aim of the funding

The Helmholtz Association wants to help talented young researchers who have completed a promising PhD thesis to further develop their scientific excellence in an effective, targeted way. The successful applicants will receive funding for a period of two to three years directly after earning their PhD, enabling them to work independently on a research topic of their own choosing and establish themselves in their field of research, e.g. by publishing on the topic. During the funding period, they will receive personal and financial support and have access to the necessary facilities and equipment.

This programme is intended to usefully complement the successful Helmholtz Young Investigators Groups and it is possible for funded Helmholtz postdocs to become Helmholtz Young Investigators Group leaders. The main difference between the two schemes is that the Helmholtz Postdoc Programme does not require participants to lead a team, and that the funding is more flexible and can be tailored to the individual needs of successful applicants. The Helmholtz Postdoc Programme also aims to increase the number of female young researchers, and is therefore particularly designed to help young women who have completed outstanding PhD theses to attain suitable postdoc positions where they can continue to develop to their full potential. To promote equal opportunities, at least 50 per cent of the positions in the programme will be granted to women. The Helmholtz Association expressly encourages the involvement of universities, non-university research institutions and commercial businesses in the research projects.

B. Target group

The programme is aimed at young researchers who have completed a PhD programme at a scientific institution in Germany or abroad up to one year prior to making the application or who are just about to complete it. Applicants should have already defended their PhD thesis. However, applications can be accepted before the thesis defense if the applicant receives a favourable recommendation from their host researcher. **The official PhD certificate or a preliminary certificate must be submitted to the Helmholtz Head Office by 2 November 2015.**

C. Funding scope, duration and amount

This round of the programme will award funding to **up to 20** applicants.

Successful candidates will generally receive an annual grant of €100,000 for a period of up to three years. Half of the funding is provided by the President's Initiative and Networking Fund, the other half is provided by host Helmholtz centre. The Funding from the President's Initiative and Networking Fund thus amounts up to maximum €50,000 per year.

Postdocs can use these funds to pay their own salary and that of a technical assistant, if required, and any travel expenses. Postdocs are encouraged to undertake a stay abroad during the grant period and can plan flexibly. The relevant Helmholtz centre must remain the postdoc's employer during this period, and it is not possible to spend the entire funding period abroad. Transferring funds abroad is subject to certain conditions, which are set out in more detail in the information sheet.

Helmholtz postdocs can attend courses offered by the Helmholtz Management Academy to develop their management skills and can also make use of the mentoring programme offered by the Academy.

D. Application

Criteria:

The most important selection criterion is the academic quality or, if available, the final grade of the candidate's PhD thesis. Excellent grades (at least "magna cum laude") and an outstanding publication record are also relevant to selection, as are any prizes or awards candidates may have won, conference papers given, or periods spent as a visiting researcher in Germany or abroad. The research proposal's strategic relevance for the Helmholtz Association and the topic's viability for the future will also be assessed.

To be eligible for the programme, candidates must have completed their doctorate not more than one year ago. The reference date is the deadline by which applications must be submitted to the Helmholtz Association's Bonn office (14 September 2015). Decisive is the date of the thesis defense. This time period can be extended by parental leave of up to two years per child.

Application process:

1. The first stage of the application process takes place within the Helmholtz centres. Applicants must independently find Helmholtz researchers who would be willing to accept them at their institution for the duration of the programme. Applications must be submitted to the director of the respective Helmholtz centre by the host researcher. **Candidates may not apply to the director directly.** The pre-selection of candidates takes place in the Helmholtz centres. The Helmholtz Bonn office will not accept any direct applications.
2. The Helmholtz centres forward the most promising applications, along with confirmation that the candidate would be accepted at the centre if successful, to the President of the Helmholtz Association. For more details, please see the **Information sheet for Helmholtz centres**.
3. If cooperations are planned, the respective institutions should be included in the selection process at an early stage. Evidence of the involvement must be submitted along with the application in the form of a cooperation agreement or letter of intent from the respective institution.

E. Decision-making process

Nominated candidates are selected on the basis of the application documents by an independent committee of experts. Candidates are not required to attend in person.

F. Application deadline and schedule

15 June 2015	Deadline for applications to Helmholtz centres
14 September 2015	Deadline for the submission of complete applications by Helmholtz centres to the Bonn office
November/December 2015	Final decision