

Funding of first-time professorial appointments of highly talented female scientists (W2/W3)

Call for applications – March 01, 2023

Within the framework of the Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation, the Helmholtz Association is intensifying its efforts to attract and fund highly talented female scientists – especially from abroad – to top positions. This call aims to support these efforts through the first-time professorial appointment program (W2/W3) for advanced female scientists who are about to become a scientific leader in their field and demonstrate outstanding scientific performance.

1. Purpose

The fundamental goal of the funding instrument is to facilitate the establishment of highly qualified candidates as professors. Therefore, the program aims to support the first appointment of highly talented female scientists to universities at the W2 or W3 level and to help them to establish themselves as professors. The strategic objectives of this funding program are to increase the proportion of women at the medium levels of Helmholtz management and to strengthen cooperation with partner universities in Germany. With respect to the target group, the program aims to recruit and retain highly qualified female scientists and create reliable career prospects by funding only permanent appointments. The additional resources also create scope for financing and equipping this first W2 or W3 position and, for example, for early appointments (so-called “vorgezogene Berufungen”). Female scientists who have already been employed at Helmholtz Centers can be funded if the appointment involves a clear career step for junior professors, young investigators group leaders, or other postdocs and if the candidate shows an outstanding scientific performance.

2. Scope and duration of the funding

Up to five professorship positions will be funded within this call. The funding volume for both W2 and W3 professorships amounts to 200,000 euros per scientist and year and increases the basic funding of the recruiting Helmholtz Center. The Helmholtz Center and the German partner university are expected to provide additional financial resources of substantial amount. The funding can be used to finance the position of the female scientist, the members of her research group and relevant equipment. An essential prerequisite for funding is a concept for the use of the funds that details their deployment and additional resources provided by the Helmholtz Center and the partner university. The jointly appointing institutions are strongly encouraged to come up with innovative offers to attract the target group (dual-career measures, onboarding offers, etc.).

The funding is targeted to the female scientist who is awarded a first-time professorial appointment through this program. If funding is granted, the successful appointment as professor (submission of the certificate of appointment is necessary) is a prerequisite for transferring funds to the budget of the recruiting Helmholtz Center. After notification of the successful appointment and announcement of the start of employment, this funding increase for the respective research programs will be granted accordingly for the duration of the employment contract at the respective Helmholtz Center. If the funded scientist leaves the Helmholtz Center, the payment of the person-related funding to the Center ends. In this case, the Helmholtz Center is obliged to inform the Helmholtz Head Office of the leave immediately. Nomination of a replacement candidate is not possible.

3. Target group

The funding program aims to support highly talented female scientists from both Germany and abroad who demonstrate outstanding scientific performance and for whom a decisive step towards a professorship can be supported. Such “rising star” candidates include:

- Internal and external candidates who will be appointed for the first time to the W2 or W3 professorship level from a junior professorship, young investigators group leadership position, or another post-doctoral position. The current position should correspond to the level ‘R3 – Established Researcher’ of the European Commission’s research profile description. The envisaged professorship must be permanent. The candidates should be excellent scientists within their respective fields.
- External candidates who are currently in a fixed-term professorship and are to be recruited to a permanent position at Helmholtz, such as from a fixed-term W2 position at another institution to a W3 position at Helmholtz. The focus lies on female scientists in the earlier phase of their careers as leaders in science (in contrast to the call for applications for “Helmholtz Distinguished Professorship – Funding for the recruitment of leading international female scientists”). Candidates who are already in permanent professorships or are to be appointed from a fixed-term W2 position at Helmholtz to a permanent W3 position are not eligible for funding.

4. Selection criteria

The most important selection criterion is the outstanding scientific performance of the applicants (CV, publications, citation index, awards, etc.). For German candidates, documentation of relevant research experience at foreign institutions is another key criterion. Other criteria include:

- Originality of the planned research work,
- Outstanding qualifications, documented by such accomplishments as an ERC Starting Grant or comparable funding, on the part of the nominated candidate,
- Complementarity of the candidate’s research profile with the applying Helmholtz Center and the research program,
- The joint commitment of the Helmholtz Center and the German partner university to support the successful establishment of the candidate as a professor. It is imperative that aspects of equipment, but also structural concerns (such as support for integration into university departments) and supporting HR development measures and, if applicable, dual-career measures will be addressed. The current status of and further plans for the appointment procedure must be outlined by the partner university.

5. Application and selection process

The application and selection process involves the following steps (see also [Annex 7](#)):

- Interested female scientists should approach the respective Helmholtz Center directly and get in touch with the contact persons indicated (see [Annex 6](#)). At the same time, the Helmholtz Centers are invited to actively recruit suitable candidates.

- The Helmholtz Centers are encouraged to organize an internal pre-selection process and enter into negotiations with their German partner universities.
- The applications for funding will then be jointly prepared by the Helmholtz Center and the candidate and submitted to the Helmholtz Head Office in Berlin via the Helmholtz Centers' Boards of Directors. Applications sent by candidates directly to the Helmholtz Head Office will not be accepted.
- At least two written reviews from international peers will be solicited by the Helmholtz Head Office for each application.
- In the event that the program is oversubscribed, the President reserves the right to make a pre-selection on the basis of the written reviews that have been obtained.
- Not later than six weeks before the meeting of the selection panel, the applying Helmholtz Centers will be informed of whether the relevant application will be considered in the next step.
- The final selection will be based on the recommendation of an independent, interdisciplinary panel of international experts. Invitations to the candidates for a personal presentation will be forwarded at least six weeks before the date of the selection meeting.
- The Helmholtz Centers' Boards of Directors will be informed about the results of the funding decision within three working days after the candidate's presentation at the selection meeting.
- The selected candidates must be appointed as professors not later than 18 months after funding has been approved. Otherwise, the funding expires.
- Funding will be transferred to the budget of the recruiting Helmholtz Center after a copy of the appointment certificate has been submitted and commencement of employment has been reported to the Helmholtz Head Office. The Head Office will promptly notify the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) that the funds have been approved.

6. Dates and deadlines

July 17, 2023: Deadline for submission of complete applications by the Helmholtz Centers to the Helmholtz Head Office

October 06, 2023: Deadline for submission of the statement by the partner university to the Helmholtz Head Office

November 27, 2023: Final selection meeting in Berlin

Not later than 18 months after funding approval: Deadline for submitting a copy of the appointment certificate and start of funding

7. Documents to be submitted

Only complete applications will be considered. The Head Office may exclude incomplete applications or applications that indicate biased reviewers.

The applicant is the nominating Helmholtz Center. The complete application documents must be submitted via email to ebp_hdp@helmholtz.de by July 17, 2023 at the latest (with exception of the partner university statement, which must be submitted by October 06, 2023). All components of the application must be written in English.

To ensure the legally binding nature of the application submission, the electronic cover letter from the Center management (see 7.I) must be signed with an advanced or qualified digital signature. If this is not possible, the manually signed original must be submitted by mail in addition to the scanned version sent via email. In this case, please send the original of the cover letter to: Helmholtz-Gemeinschaft Deutscher Forschungszentren e.V., Ahrstraße 45, 53175 Bonn. The date of the e-mail is decisive for meeting the deadline.

I. Cover letter from the Helmholtz Centers' Boards of Directors

Separate document, English, PDF

We ask that the cover letter from the Helmholtz Centers' Boards of Directors is written in English. The cover letter from the Boards of Directors should address the following aspects:

- strategic importance of the appointment for the Helmholtz Center, complementarity with the Helmholtz program, and relevance to the research field
- resources commitment with reference to the matching funds listed in the financial plan
- assignment to a program or defined division into several programs
- information on the status of arrangements with the candidate and the partner university

II. Application (based on the application template (Annex 1), English, one PDF)

Please note: Annex 1 is a template for preparing the application. Using this template is a formal prerequisite for application submission. The maximum number of pages specified for each component must not be exceeded. The structure of the application is as follows:

1. Overview of the application

- stakeholders and thematic focus
- nominated candidate
- summary of the planned research program for the first five years

2. Role of the activities of the nominated candidate in the strategy of the applying Helmholtz Center and the relevant Helmholtz research program(s) (max. 2 pages)

- strategic goals of the appointment
- collaboration and networking with universities and non-university research institutions

3. Motivation of the nominated candidate (max. 2 pages)

- motivation to join the Helmholtz Center
- motivation to join the German partner university

4. Curriculum vitae of the nominated candidate (max. 3 pages)

5. Description of the planned work program (max. 15 pages)

- state of the art and preliminary work
- objectives

- five-year work program including proposed research methods
- long-term research plans

Note: A reference list can be added and will not be counted as part of the max. 15 pages.

6. Financial plan

- The financial plan must be submitted as part of the written application and as a separate Excel file.
- Please prepare the financial plan first using the Excel file (Annex 2) and then paste the calculated data additionally into the application template (Annex 1) under chapter 6.1 and 6.2.
- For details, see application component “III. Financial plan” below.

7. Publications and patents

- publication metrics
- five selected key publications
- publication list
- patents (if applicable)

8. Recommendation letter from the Scientific Advisory Board of the Helmholtz Center submitting the application (English, PDF) (max. 2 pages)

III. Financial plan

Separate Excel file (Annex 2) & copying of the values into the application template (Annex 1) under chapter 6.1 and 6.2.

The following two tables must be calculated:

- **Table 6.1:** costs for the first five years with annual data on personnel costs, costs of materials and supplies, and investments. In the event of division into several programs, this must be clearly stated in the financial plan.
- **Table 6.2:** financial contributions by the Helmholtz Center, financial contributions by the partner university (if applicable) and funding from this scheme, that is: resources of the Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation.

IV. Partner university statement

Separate document, English, PDF

The partner university statement must be written in English and should be signed by high-ranking officials (president, vice president or dean, including official stamp). This statement should address the following aspects:

- intended appointment (denomination, integration into the department and any other relevant structures)
- promised resources, if applicable planned dual-career measures
- appointment procedure outlook

The partner university statement must be submitted to the Helmholtz Head Office via e-mail to ebp_hdp@helmholtz.de by **October 06, 2023** at the latest. Please note that only German universities are applicable as partner universities.

V. Proposal of six unbiased reviewers in the relevant field

Separate document, English, Excel file

Please use **Annex 3** (Excel file) for listing six unbiased potential reviewers.

VI. Declaration with regard to the proposal of six unbiased reviewers in the relevant field

Please consider the notes in **Annex 4** which must be signed by the nominated candidate.

VII. Declaration of consent regarding data protection

Use **Annex 5** to consent to our data policy which must be signed by the nominated candidate.

File names

Please submit the application documents via e-mail to ebp_hdp@helmholtz.de as PDF files (no more than 3 MB) respectively as Excel files in the following order and name the files as indicated below:

I_Cover_letter_CandidateSurname_Center.pdf

II_Application_CandidateSurname_Center.pdf

III_Financial_plan_CandidateSurname_Center.xlsx

IV_University_statement_CandidateSurname_Center.pdf

V_Proposal_unbiased_reviewers_CandidateSurname_Center.xlsx

VI_Declaration_unbiased_reviewers_CandidateSurname_Center.pdf

VII_Declaration_data_protection_CandidateSurname_Center.pdf

8. List of annexes

- Annex 1: Application template (Word file, mandatory use)
- Annex 2: Financial plan (Excel file, mandatory use)
- Annex 3: List of six unbiased potential reviewers (Excel file, mandatory use)
- Annex 4: Declaration with regard to the proposal of six unbiased reviewers in the relevant field (Word file, mandatory use)
- Annex 5: Declaration of consent regarding data protection (Word file, mandatory use)
- Annex 6: Contact persons at the Helmholtz Centers
- Annex 7: Overview of the application and selection process
- Annex 8: Data protection compulsory information
- Annex 9: Frequently asked questions (FAQ)