

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

as of December 1, 2021

for up to 9 Helmholtz Young Investigator Groups

funded by the Initiative and Networking Fund of the
President of the Helmholtz Association

19th Call for Applications

Deadline May 3, 2022

I.	Objectives of the program	3
II.	Target group	3
III.	Application	5
	1 Selection process	5
	2 Selection criteria	6
	3 Formal requirements and application documents	6
	4 Dates and deadlines	9
IV.	Funding phase	9
	1 Funding decision and contract	9
	2 Mandatory leadership training in the Helmholtz Leadership Academy	9
	3 Reporting	9
	4 Evaluation of the Helmholtz Young Investigator Group	9
	5 Open science publication	10
	6 Extension of the funding period	10
V.	Data Protection Compulsory Information - GDPR	11

The Helmholtz Association aims to win outstanding post-doctoral researchers (2 to 6 years after their PhD) to establish their own Young Investigator Group at a Helmholtz Center. Helmholtz looks for candidates who have demonstrated exceptional scientific excellence and potential to take up a leadership position in science. Women scientists are particularly encouraged to apply.

I. Objectives of the program

The Helmholtz Young Investigator Groups program aims to win the best international and national early-career scientists (2 to 6 years after their PhD) for a first leadership position in science. It offers Young Investigator Group leaders the opportunity to establish and lead their own independent research group at a Helmholtz Center in cooperation with a partner university. As a Young Investigator Group leader, they can access the research infrastructure, grow to their full potential as a leader in science as well as strengthen and further develop their networks in the scientific community. Young Investigator Group leaders collaborate closely with a partner university to establish research cooperation in areas of joint interest. The focus of the group must be of relevance to a [Helmholtz research program](#). The cooperation with the partner university allows Young Investigator Group leaders to gain experience in teaching and PhD supervision. Further qualification entails a structured leadership training at the Helmholtz Leadership Academy. As a consequence of a positive evaluation after three years of funding, Young Investigator Group leaders are granted a permanent position at the Helmholtz Center¹.

Funding will be granted for up to nine Helmholtz Young Investigator Groups working in the research fields of Energy, Earth and Environment, Health, Information, Matter, and Aeronautics, Space, and Transport. The co-funding provided by the Initiative and Networking Fund (INF) amounts to 150,000 Euros maximum per annum. The Helmholtz Center and the partner university are expected to provide co-funding with an equivalent of 150.000 Euros minimum. **Young Investigator Groups thus generally receive a minimum of 300,000 Euros a year for a five-year period.** The funding covers costs for:

- the group leader position, normally at E 14/15 TVöD (collective agreement 14/15 for civil service employees),
- scientific and/or technical staff (normally three or four),
- expenses for materials, travel, and investments.

The Helmholtz Association supports Young Investigator Group leaders who experience unavoidable downtimes during the funding. Group leaders who go on parental or care leave, become severely ill or experience other plausible forms of unavoidable scientific downtime can prolong their funding period to a maximum of six years.

II. Target group

This call targets outstanding researchers who have two to six years of post-doctoral and documented international research experience:

- **Two to six years after receiving a doctoral degree (academic age²).** For maternity, the track record considered can be extended by 18 months, or if longer by the amount of leave actually taken until the call deadline,

¹ If possible, leaders of Helmholtz Young Investigator Groups should be jointly appointed as professors (W1, W2 or W3) after positive evaluation by the Helmholtz Center and its partner university.

² The Helmholtz Association is strongly committed to become a more inclusive environment, in which persons with different backgrounds and at different stages of their lives can thrive. In 2020, the Helmholtz Association has

for each child born after the PhD award. For paternity leave, the track record considered can be extended by the amount of paternity leave actually taken until the call deadline for each child born after the PhD award. Parental leave times include periods of part-time work (no more than 25 % paid work), in which you took over the main share of family work. If you have been seriously ill long-term³, cared full-time for an adult family member in need or suffered other personal hardships (e.g. flight or asylum), which did not allow you to pursue your research, these periods of unavoidable downtime of your scientific career can also be considered. Likewise, times of clinical training after the award of a PhD can be considered up to a maximum of four years. The same standards go for times of full-time employment in the industry, which can be considered up to a maximum of four years. Please indicate the date of your PhD award in your CV and on the cover sheet of the application (see Annex 1). Periods of parental leave, care leave or unavoidable downtime can be indicated voluntarily. Based on this information, Helmholtz will calculate your academic age, which will be the cornerstone for the evaluation of your track record.

Fictional examples for how Helmholtz calculates academic age

Laura has been awarded her PhD in January 2015. Two years into her postdoc, she has given birth to her child. Her academic age at May 3, 2022, is 5 years and 9 months (18 months are subtracted). She is eligible.

Nikola has been awarded his PhD in August 2015. He has become a father of two during his postdoc. For each child, he has been on parental leave for 6 months, in which he has focused on his care responsibilities. His academic age at May 3, 2022, is 5 years and 8 months (6+6 months are subtracted). He is eligible.

Ebru has been awarded her PhD in May 2016. In order to care for her children, she has worked part-time (25 %) over the course of one year in her postdoc phase. Her academic age at May 3, 2022, is 5 years and 3 months (1 year of 25% part-time equals 3 months of academic age). She is eligible.

Ryo has been awarded a PhD in May 2015. Due to a car accident with a lengthy recovery, Ryo was not able to do research over the course of 15 months. Ryo's academic age is 5 years and 9 months. Ryo is eligible.

- **International research experience.** Candidates should have international research experience for at least six continuous months during their doctoral or postdoctoral studies. Exceptions can be made for outstanding researchers for whom international mobility may be plausibly challenging due to care responsibilities or personal hardships.
- **Recruitment of external talents.** The Helmholtz Young Investigator Groups program is a recruiting instrument to gain external talents for Helmholtz. Internal candidates are not eligible. Exceptions can be made for outstanding candidates who are employed by a Helmholtz Center for less than one year.

If a Helmholtz Center would like to nominate a candidate who does not fulfil these requirements, it should contact the Helmholtz Association in advance to discuss the case. Funding will only be provided in particularly plausible and well-justified cases.

adopted the [Helmholtz Guideline on Diversity and Inclusion](#), which describes diversity and inclusion as a key strategic commitment. To initiate systemic change, the Helmholtz Association adopts changes in its funding schemes by focusing on academic age. Our role model for calculating academic age are the gender-specific clock-stopping policies of the ERC Starting Grant as well as the DFG. Indications of unavoidable downtime are voluntary and are not passed on to the reviewers or the selection panel. A documentation of such times is only necessary upon request.

³ More than 90 days.

III. Application

For candidates: Please contact the Helmholtz Center that you are interested in early. Each Helmholtz Center carries out an internal pre-selection at center level to decide who will be nominated for the selection process at Helmholtz level.

1 Selection process

The application process involves several stages:

- Application of candidates at the Helmholtz Center.** Candidates should approach the Helmholtz Centers they are interested in directly with a draft of their application and get in touch with the contact persons indicated in Annex 7 before applying. The contact persons will inform you about the process of and deadline for the pre-selection at the Helmholtz center.
- Pre-selection at the Helmholtz Center and nomination of candidates.** Each Helmholtz Center carries out a transparent pre-selection process, which is documented in the selection statistics of the center (Annex 6). After the pre-selection process, the Helmholtz Centers nominate the most promising candidates and ask them to submit their complete application documents. The maximum number of candidates that each Helmholtz Center can nominate is as follows:

no more than 4 applications:	- Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt DLR - Forschungszentrum Jülich FZJ - Karlsruher Institut für Technologie KIT
no more than 3 applications:	- Alfred-Wegener-Institut Helmholtz-Zentrum für Polar- und Meeresforschung AWI - Deutsches Elektronen-Synchrotron DESY - Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum DKFZ - Helmholtz-Zentrum München – Forschungszentrum für Gesundheit und Umwelt HMGU - Helmholtz-Zentrum Berlin für Materialien und Energie HZB - Helmholtz-Zentrum Dresden-Rossendorf HZDR
no more than 2 applications:	- Deutsches Zentrum für Neurodegenerative Erkrankungen DZNE - GEOMAR Helmholtz-Zentrum für Ozeanforschung Kiel - Helmholtz-Zentrum Potsdam – Deutsches Geoforschungsinstitut GFZ - GSI Helmholtz-Zentrum für Schwerionenforschung⁴ - Helmholtz-Zentrum Geesthacht – Zentrum für Material- und Küstenforschung HEREON - Helmholtz-Zentrum für Infektionsforschung HZI - Helmholtz-Zentrum für Informationssicherheit CISPA - Max-Delbrück-Centrum für Molekulare Medizin in der Helmholtz Gemeinschaft MDC - Helmholtz-Zentrum für Umweltforschung UFZ

⁴ The GSI is eligible to apply only via Helmholtz Institute Jena and Mainz.

3. **Submission of applications.** The heads of the Helmholtz Centers submit the applications to the Helmholtz head office online to the new Helmholtz project management platform⁵. Candidates cannot apply directly to the Helmholtz head office, as formally the nominating Helmholtz center is the applicant.
4. **Review process and pre-selection by the President of the Helmholtz Association.** External reviewers will assess the applications. Based on the written reviews the President of the Helmholtz Association pre-selects the most promising candidates. These are invited to present their proposal at the final selection meeting four weeks prior to the latter.
5. **Final selection meeting:** Candidates will present their proposals in front of an interdisciplinary panel of international experts. At the end of the meeting, the panel will take the final funding decision.
6. **Start of funding.** Successful candidates have to start their Helmholtz Young Investigator Group within 12 months after funding approval; otherwise, the funding will expire.

2 Selection criteria

The most important selection criteria are outstanding scientific achievements and research experience of the candidates (i.e. CV, publications, citation index, awards, etc.) as well as the quality of the planned research project (innovation capacity, relevance, structure, coherence, feasibility). Further criteria include the strategic importance for the nominating institution (the host Helmholtz Center) and synergy effects resulting from the cooperation between the Helmholtz Center and the partner university. In the final selection meeting, the candidates' ability to perform in front of the panel, to present the essence of their research in a condensed form and to defend their ideas will also play a role for the decision. Furthermore, leadership qualities and, in particular, the ability to supervise doctoral students will be taken into account.

3 Formal requirements and application documents

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 documents⁶ must be submitted to the new project management platform by May 3, 2022 (cut-off date). Please submit the application documents in English as Pdf files (no more than 3 MB) in the following order and name the files as indicated below:

0. 0_Center cover letter_CENTER_NAME: incl. personal career development plan and tenure/employment options after positive evaluation as well as the confirmation of terms of agreement (see Annex 0, as one file)
1. 1_Assessable application_NAME: incl. Cover sheet , CV, list of publications (Annex 1)
2. 2_Financial plan_NAME (Annex 2)
3. 3_ University statement_NAME (Annex 3)
4. 4_Data consent_NAME (Annex 4)
5. 5_List of six unbiased reviewers_NAME (Annex 5)
6. 6_Selection statistics_CENTER (Annex 6)

⁵ This new platform is currently developed and will be continuously rolled out over the course of 2022. In the long-term, all INF-projects will be managed using the platform. This encompasses the submission of applications. In order to give a short introduction to the submission process via the platform, we will offer a short workshop in April 2022.

⁶ The university statement can be submitted later (see "4. Dates and deadlines").

- The Helmholtz Center supports the nominated candidates in preparing the application. Resubmissions are only possible if the selection panel explicitly has advised the center and the respective candidate to resubmit his/her application. If a center resubmits an application, developments and changes since the last application should be described in detail.
- The partner university should be involved in the selection process at an early stage to ensure a smooth integration of the Helmholtz Young Investigator Group leaders into the departments of the partner university and ideally prepare a joint appointment as a professor. Please use Annex 3 ("University statement") to specify the rights and duties of the candidate at the partner university. Submit the university statement by **August 26, 2022** at the latest.

Center cover letter

Please submit the following documents in one Pdf file as 0_Center cover letter_Center_NAME.

a) Letter from the board:

Please provide a brief letter of recommendation for the candidate(s) and an outline of the strategic importance of the research proposal(s) to the Helmholtz Center and POF. Further letters of recommendation (e.g. from direct superiors) are unnecessary and will not be forwarded to the review panel.

b) Confirmation of terms of agreement (see Annex 0)

c) Career development plan for the group leader

- The planned career development trajectory of the candidate at the Center (and the partner university) has to be specified in detail including the following aspects:
 - Qualification needs and requirements of the group leader (and further team members or the whole team, if applicable)
 - Planned qualification measures (such as workshops, coaching, and mentoring)
 - The envisaged permanent position after positive evaluation. The President of the Helmholtz Association strongly encourages the Helmholtz Centers to offer group leaders, who have been evaluated positively, attractive tenure options (professorships or leadership positions with managerial responsibilities). The candidate must be informed about the envisaged career option before nomination.
 - A contact person for the group leader to reflect his or her career path on a regular basis (min. once as part of the evaluation)

d) An evaluation concept:

Please describe the planned evaluation process after three years of funding. A substantial participation of external reviewers is mandatory. The candidate must be informed about the evaluation process and criteria before nomination.

Assessable application

Please submit the following documents in one Pdf file as 1_Assessable application_NAME:

1. Cover sheet (see Annex 1)
2. Application text (no more than 20 pages, Arial 10 pt.):
 - a description of the research aims of the Helmholtz Young Investigator group, which demonstrates the relevance of the project to the research discipline(s)
 - a timeline with clearly defined work packages and milestones

- a concept of cooperation with the Helmholtz Center and the partner university (as well as further cooperation partners, if applicable), highlighting the strategic significance and benefits of the planned cooperation as well as describing the fit the respective Helmholtz program and the research focus of the partner university/department. If the strategic relevance is integrated in the description of the research aims, a short reference to the relevant paragraphs is sufficient.

3. CV

4. List of publications incl. h-Index (please highlight peer-reviewed and first or corresponding author publications)

Financial plan

Use Annex 2 to calculate the prospective finances of the group and convert it into a Pdf file named 2_Financial plan_NAME.

University statement

A Young Investigator Group can be hosted at a Helmholtz Center or jointly at a Helmholtz Center and the partner university. Cooperation with international partners is strongly encouraged. Yet, Helmholtz Young Investigator Groups cannot be hosted at institutions outside of Germany. Although cooperation with private sector organizations is appreciated to increase knowledge and technology transfer, the latter cannot receive any funding from the INF.

Use Annex 3 to describe the rights and duties of the candidate at the partner university. High-ranking officials (President, Vice-Chancellor, and Dean, including official stamp) should sign it. The university statement can be submitted until August 26, 2022, the latest. Name the file 3_University Statement_NAME.

Data consent

Use Annex 4 to consent to our data policy and submit the file title 3_Data consent_NAME.

List of six potential unbiased reviewers

Use Annex 5 to indicate six unbiased reviewers (min. two women scientists). If in doubt about potential bias, please do reach out to the Helmholtz Association early.

Selection statistics

The Helmholtz Center should use Annex 6 to make the pre-selection process transparent. Please submit the Pdf file named as 6_Selection statistics_CENTER.

4 Dates and deadlines

For candidates: Please contact the Helmholtz Center to obtain the deadline of the internal selection process.

May 3, 2022: Deadline for submission of complete application documents by the Helmholtz Centers to the Helmholtz Head Office via the project management platform (cutoff date; key date for determining 2-6 years after doctorate)

August 26, 2022: Deadline for submission of the university statement to the Helmholtz Head Office via the project management platform

October 4-5, 2022: Final selection meeting

No more than 12 months after receiving funding approval: Start of the Helmholtz Young Investigator Group

IV. Funding phase

1 Funding decision and contract

After a positive funding decision, group leaders will negotiate their start date with the Helmholtz Center and inform the Helmholtz Association about the latter. Afterwards, the contract is issued. Funding is provided based on a grant agreement between the Helmholtz Association and the applying Helmholtz Center (see funding contract).

2 Mandatory leadership training in the Helmholtz Leadership Academy

Group leaders are required to attend the course “Leading Your Group” at the [Helmholtz Leadership Academy](#) in the first or second year of the funding period. This course was designed especially for the new Helmholtz Association Young Investigator Group leaders. The curriculum prepares participants for their new leadership responsibilities and supports them in successfully developing their group. Further information is available in the [Fact sheet](#). The course fees of about €5,200 can be factored into the application’s financial plan and covered either wholly or in part by the Centers. In addition, the Helmholtz Centers and partner universities also provide further qualification and career counselling services as specified in the career development plan.

3 Reporting

In each year of your funding, you have to submit reports covering the activities of your group by April 30. A report form will be made available to you. At latest, six month after the end of the funding period, you have to submit a final report.

4 Evaluation of the Helmholtz Young Investigator Group

After three years, the Helmholtz Centers evaluate the Helmholtz Young Investigator Group and its leader – in consultation with the partner university. A substantial participation of external reviewers is mandatory. The evaluation results will inform the Helmholtz Center’s decision whether the fixed-term contract of the group leader will be changed to a permanent contract, which is the case after univocally positive evaluations. The outcome of the evaluation has to be sent to the Helmholtz Association in an evaluation report.

5 Open science publication

By accepting funding from the Initiative and Networking Fund of the Helmholtz Association, candidates agree to make scientific publications based either entirely or in part on the results of the funded project available to everyone in a freely accessible archive (repository) no later than six months after the original publication. In well-justified cases, open science publications may be waived. Those cases must be reported to the Helmholtz Association in advance.

6 Extension of the funding period

We can extend your funding period in the following cases:

- You have taken child or care leave during the funding period. The time can be added to your funding period when made plausible.
- You have experienced unavoidable downtimes during the funding period (e.g. severe illness, personal hardships). The time can be added to your funding period when made plausible.

Please note that these periods of leave or downtime cannot add up to more than one year. The maximum funding period amounts to six years. A further year of cost-neutral prolongation is possible.

V. Data Protection Compulsory Information - GDPR

Information about the processing of your data in the application and assessment procedure of your funding application

In the following, we would like to inform you about the collection and processing of your data in connection with the application and assessment procedure in pursuit of a financial grant for your proposed research project.

1. Processing specific information

Name and contact details of the responsible person	Hermann von Helmholtz-Gemeinschaft Deutscher Forschungszentren e.V. Anna-Louisa-Karsch-Straße 2, 10178 Berlin, 030.206 329 738
Contact details of the Data Protection Officer	by post to the above address, with the addition "Data Protection Officer"; by e-mail: datenschutz@helmholtz.de
Categories of personal data	Name, date of birth, gender, nationality, photo, address, telephone number, e-mail address, motivation letter, curriculum vitae, publications, patents, letters of recommendation, references, and explanations
Purposes for which the personal data are to be processed	As part of processing your funding application, we collect the personal information that you submit to us. The purpose of the collection of your data is to carry out the assessment procedure, which is necessary to review the conditions for the grant. Also, we collect and process information in case application interviews are scheduled to take place. In the case of funding, as these personal data are part of the project, they will be used for reporting, quality assurance, and evaluation.
Legal basis for the processing	Art. 6 para. 1 lit. b GDPR
Recipients or categories of recipients of the personal data	Reviewer and experts as part of the assessment and evaluation processes.
Transfer to a third country, including measures to ensure an adequate level of data protection for the recipient	As part of the assessment process, your data will be sent worldwide to international peer reviewers to support the selection process. These recipients will only receive your data for the time period and to the extent that is necessary for the completion of the assessment and evaluation.
Data storage policy	The data will be deleted unless storage is necessary for legal reasons or obligations.

2. Necessity of data collection

You are under no legal or contractual obligation to provide the information. The provision of such information is necessary for the assessment of your application. In the case of funding, these personal data are part of the reporting, quality assurance, and evaluation processes. The possible consequence of not providing this information is that we cannot assess your application.

3. Consent of the person concerned

If the person responsible processes personal data based on consent, this consent can be revoked by the person concerned at any time. The revocation does not affect the lawfulness of the processing of personal data until revoked.

4. Rights of the data subject

According to the GDPR, the person concerned has the following rights and claims against the person responsible:

- the right to information (Art. 15 GDPR),
- the right to rectification (Art. 16 GDPR),
- the right to cancellation (Art. 17 GDPR),
- the right to limit the processing (Art. 18 GDPR),
- the right to data transmission (Art. 20 GDPR) and
- the right of withdrawal (Art. 21 GDPR).

5. Right of complaint to a supervisory authority

The party concerned has the right to lodge a complaint with a supervisory authority pursuant to Art. 77 GDPR. Accordingly, without prejudice to any other administrative or judicial remedy, any data subject may lodge a complaint with a supervisory authority, in particular in the member state of his/her place of residence, workplace, or place of the presumed infringement, if the data subject believes that the processing of his/her data violates the GDPR.