

Call for Applications 15 January 2017

15 Helmholtz Young Investigators Groups

Sponsored by the President's Initiative and Networking Fund

A priority for the Helmholtz Association is to recruit excellent junior scientists to lead their own research group. By leading your own Helmholtz Young Investigators' Group at one of our 18 Research Centres, all with excellent science infrastructure, your chances to secure your career in research, academia and industry are exceptional. Excellent female scientists meeting the eligibility criteria are encouraged to apply.

A. Goal of the funding

A key objective of the Helmholtz Association's mission is to promote talented young scientists. Through its Investigators Groups the Association provides international and German junior researchers with the excellent scientific working conditions they need to achieve that objective. Investigators Group leader are given early independence and have attractive career prospects (including permanent employment, support and flexibility in the family phase, mentoring and a special course on leadership skills at the Helmholtz Management Academy). Investigators Group leaders are expected to work closely with university partners. In this way, they are given the opportunity to gain teaching experience and acquire the necessary qualifications for a higher academic career. The President of the Helmholtz Association supports every endeavour to establish professorships for successful candidates jointly with a partner university.

Commercial enterprises are welcome to become involved as associated partners. However, they cannot receive funding from the Initiative and Networking Fund.

B. Purpose of the funding

Funding is granted to up to 15 independent Young Investigators Groups working in the fields of *Energy; Earth and Environment; Health; Key Technologies; Matter, and, Aeronautics, Space and Transport*. Young Investigators Groups receive a minimum of €300,000 a year. This covers costs for:

- the position of group leader, (normally at E 14/15 TVöD / BAT Ib/Ia, equivalent to c.€63,000 a year),
- scientific or technical staff (three or four on average),
- expenses for materials, supplies and investment.

Helmholtz Young Investigators Groups are set up by Helmholtz Centres or jointly by Helmholtz Centres and universities to work on overlapping areas of research and expertise of interest to both parties. Group's themes must have relevance to a Helmholtz programme and where applicable to the university or faculty's primary focus. A group leader is expected to build up and to maintain close contacts with a partner university in his/her field of research, which includes teaching during the period of funding. Where possible, the leaders of the Helmholtz-University Young Investigators Groups should also be given joint positions as professors.

Even in cases where there is no possibility of a professorship, leaders of the Young Investigators Groups should be jointly appointed by the Helmholtz Centre and the university and should have the same rights and obligations as professors (personnel and budget

responsibilities, assisting PhD students in the completion of their doctoral studies¹, taking on teaching assignments of ≤ 4 weekly teaching hours per semester, access to all necessary resources/infrastructure), in accordance with the individual state laws in higher education.

The Investigators Groups can be based at a Helmholtz Centre or jointly at a Helmholtz Centre and a university. Investigators Groups must perform specific scientific work for both partner institutions, as defined in the planned work programme. International partnerships are welcomed. However, Helmholtz Young Investigators Groups cannot be established abroad (see [Appendix 1](#) FAQs).

To provide the best possible support for junior researchers setting up their own groups and to prepare them for their leadership responsibilities, a special course on leadership skills has been created at the Helmholtz Management Academy (see information in [Appendix 1](#) and [Appendix 2](#)). The Helmholtz Centres also offer training courses and consultancy services. We welcome any further support offered by our partner organisations.

During their parental leave, Young Investigator Group leaders have the possibility to acquire further support such as cost neutral prolongation of the funding period, transfer of funding, and, if required, further funding. The Helmholtz Association wants to make sure that for both women and men have the opportunity to successfully combine family planning and scientific career. Group leaders who are absent due to parental leave can apply for additional funding for a temporary deputy leader (if possible) in order to continue the research project.

C. Target group

This call is directed towards excellent researchers with between two and six years' postdoctoral experience from international institutions or from domestic institutions - with proven research experience abroad. Periods of parental leave do not count towards the six years' limit.

International research experience can be proven as follows: a continuous stay abroad of at least six months as part of doctoral or post-doctoral studies; the acquisition of an academic degree in combination with a minimum six-month stay abroad; the coordination of a major international research project or significant involvement in major international research cooperation. Exceptions may be made for individual/family reasons.

Junior scientists with children, who are already working as postdocs at a Helmholtz Centre and where international mobility may be restricted for practical reasons, are encouraged to apply. The most important selection criterion is the outstanding quality of the applicants.

Within this call at least about 40% of Young Investigators Group leader positions will be awarded to female scientists.

D. Duration of funding

The term of each research group is six years with an evaluation after 3-4 years. In the case of a family phase, the funding period can be prolonged and the evaluation postponed.

Following an unqualified positive evaluation, the candidate will be offered a permanent employment contract by a Helmholtz Centre, if possible, with staff responsibilities, without having to submit a new application. The decision to grant a permanent position of employment, preferably with leadership responsibility, will be made on the basis of a quality assessment based on international standards of the candidate's scientific achievements, as well as an evaluation of the project's relevance to the corresponding Helmholtz programme. The examination procedure will be carried out by the host Centre with substantial participation by external reviewers. Details of the procedure are settled in the Centre's or respectively the research field's tenure policy.

¹ For the supervision of PhD students, the *Guidelines for the completion of PhD projects within the Helmholtz Association* must be observed alongside the relevant universities' PhD regulations.

The Initiative and Networking Fund cannot release the funds for the fifth/sixth year until the evaluation report has been submitted with a corresponding statement from the Helmholtz Centre concerned. The statement should include an outline of how the expected career trajectory for the leader of the Young Investigators Group is expected to develop ([Appendix 3](#)).

E. Application

The call for applications will be issued internationally.

The application procedure has three stages ([Appendix 4](#)):

1. **Applicant** should approach the Helmholtz Centre **directly by 10 March 2017** (see Guidelines for Applicants), preferably through the contact named ([Appendix 7](#)).
2. The **Centres** decide on their nominees in agreement with the university partner and following a pre-selection process and ask **up to six nominees** to submit the complete application documents. These applications are then submitted to the Helmholtz Head Office in Bonn via the boards of the centres **by 5 May 2017 (cut-off period)**. Applications sent directly to the Head Office will not be accepted.
3. The joint statement by the university and the Helmholtz Centre has to be submitted to the Helmholtz Head Office in Bonn by **10 August 2017** ([Appendix 5](#)).
4. **Candidates** are then selected from amongst the nominees on the basis of written recommendations given **by international Experts** and then the final choice is made following a personal presentation by these candidates to the Helmholtz Young Investigators Groups **Review Panel. The final selection will take place from 4 to 5 September 2017 in Berlin**. Applicants who are invited to the presentation will **receive their invitations about four weeks in advance**.
5. Successful candidates have to start their Young Investigators Group at the latest **12 months after receiving the funding approval**.

Appendices:

- Appendix 1: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
- Appendix 2: Fact Sheet for Applicants and Helmholtz Centres
- Appendix 3: Personnel development plan
- Appendix 4: Selection process
- Appendix 5: Joint statement
- Appendix 6: Unbiased reviewers
- Appendix 7: Contact persons at the Helmholtz Centres
- Appendix 8: act Sheet for Universities
- Appendix 9: Summary
- Appendix 10: Finances