CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

as of January 13, 2021 for up to 9 Helmholtz Young Investigator Groups

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

18th Call for Applications

Deadline May 3, 2021

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The Helmholtz Association is committed to offer outstanding international junior researchers the opportunity to establish their own adequately equipped Young Investigator Group at a Helmholtz Center to successfully and permanently establish themselves in the scientific community. Outstanding women scientists meeting the eligibility criteria are especially encouraged to apply.

I. Goal and purpose of the program

A key objective of the Helmholtz Association's mission is the individual promotion of talented early-stage researchers. Through its Helmholtz Young Investigator Groups program, the Association enables the best international and German early-stage scientists to set up and lead their own research group. Young Investigator Group leaders are given scientific independence and have attractive career prospects. This includes a tenure option, support, and flexibility during the family phase, and further qualifications at the Helmholtz Leadership Academy. Young Investigator Group leaders are expected to collaborate closely with a university partner, gathering teaching and Ph.D. supervision experience. The President of the Helmholtz Association supports every endeavor to establish professorships for successful candidates jointly with a partner university.

Promotion of excellent early talents in science

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 funding provided by the Initiative and Networking Fund (INF) of the President of the Helmholtz Association will amount to up to 150,000 Euros per annum and will serve as co-financing. The Helmholtz Center and cooperating university are expected to provide funding with an at least an equivalent amount. **Young Investigator Groups thus generally receive a minimum of 300,000 Euros a year for five years**. This 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.

Helmholtz Centers and universities jointly set up Helmholtz Young Investigator Groups in areas of mutual interest. Specifically, the Group's focus must be of relevance to a <u>Helmholtz Program-oriented Funding</u> topic and should promote cooperation with the partnering university. Where possible, leaders of Helmholtz Young Investigator Groups should be given joint professorships.

The Helmholtz Young Investigator Group can be based at a Helmholtz Center or jointly at a Helmholtz Center and a cooperating university. The group leaders are expected to perform specific scientific work for both partner institutions and this work must be defined in the planned work program. Cooperation with international partners is strongly encouraged. Helmholtz Young Investigator Groups cannot be established at institutions abroad. Although businesses are highly appreciated as associated partners they cannot receive funding from the INF.

Early independence, support during family phases, and leadership training

In the interest of providing the best possible support for junior scientists setting up their own groups and preparing them for leadership responsibilities, group leaders are required to attend the "Leading Your Group" course at the <u>Helmholtz Leadership Academy</u> in the first or second year of funding. This course is specifically designed for new Young Investigator Group leaders.

In addition, the Helmholtz Centers and partner organizations also provide qualification and advisory services. The planned qualification measures have to be described in a career development concept in the application.



The Helmholtz Association aims to make sure that all group leaders have the opportunity to successfully combine family planning and a scientific career. Therefore, during family phases, group leaders who go on parental leave or work part-time can apply for additional funding for a temporary deputy to cover their leadership responsibilities (where possible), allowing a smooth continuation of the research project.

II. Target group

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

- Two to six years max. after receiving a doctoral degree. Parental leave periods in this phase will be taken into consideration at two years per child under the age of 12. The graduation date and the dates of birth of any children must be indicated in the CV and on the cover sheet of the application (see Annex 1). Exceptions may be made only in special cases (for example, if the six-year limit is exceeded due to the special requirements of a physician's clinical career, or in case of particularly excellent research achievements immediately after receiving the doctorate).
- International research experience. This must be documented by a minimum of a six-month continuous research stay abroad during the doctoral or postdoctoral studies. Exceptions can be made for outstanding researchers for whom international mobility may be restricted due to special circumstances (i.e. due to family circumstances).
- The Helmholtz Young Investigator Groups program is primarily a recruiting instrument to attract external candidates and especially wishes to attract promising women scientists to continue their careers in science. The aim is to award at least 40% of Helmholtz Young Investigator Group leader positions to women scientists. Candidates already employed by a Helmholtz Center (in particular female candidates) are eligible but have to demonstrate a specific qualification, high international experience, competitiveness, and mobility to a certain degree.

III. Application

1. Guidelines and nomination

The call for applications will be issued internationally. The application procedure involves several stages:

- 1. **Candidates** should approach the Helmholtz Centers **directly** with a draft of their application and contact the point of contact indicated (see Annex 5) before applying.
- Following an candidate pre-selection process at the respective center, the Helmholtz Centers decide on their nominees and request that they submit the complete application documents. Please contact the Helmholtz Center to obtain the deadline for the internal selection process.
- 3. 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 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 Schwerionenforschung¹ Helmholtz-Zentrum Geesthacht – Zentrum für Material- und Küstenforschung HZG 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

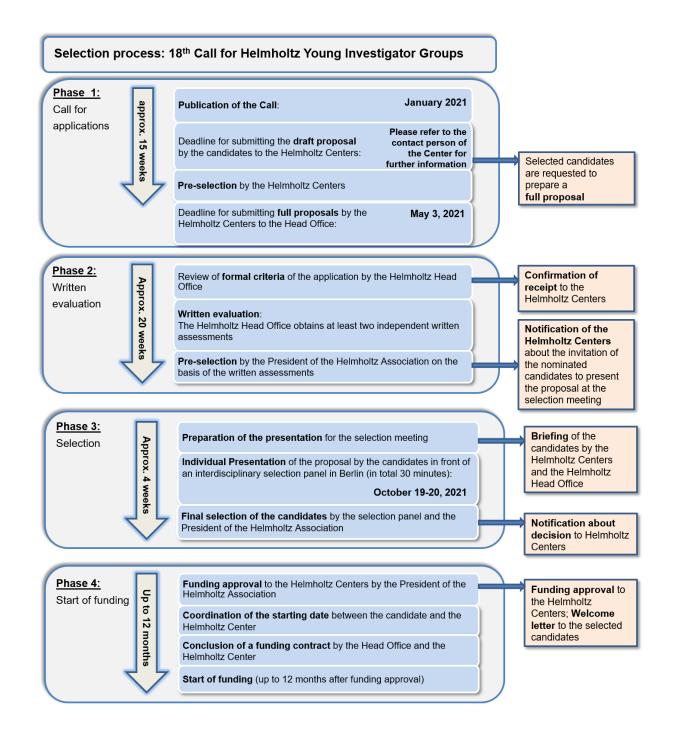
- 4. These applications are then submitted to the Helmholtz Head Office in Bonn (Ahrstrasse 45, 53175 Bonn, Germany) via the heads of the Helmholtz Centers as well as online via the **Helmholtz Nextcloud**. Applications sent directly to the Helmholtz Head Office by candidates will not be accepted.
- 5. The invitation of candidates to give a presentation in person in front of an interdisciplinary panel of international experts in Berlin is based on a preselection with written assessments. Candidates who are invited to present their proposal will receive their invitations about four weeks in advance.
- 6. Successful candidates have to start their Helmholtz Young Investigator Group within 12 months of receiving funding approval; otherwise, the funding will expire.

2. Selection criteria and process

The most important selection criterion 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. An overview of the selection procedure can be found below:

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¹ The GSI is eligible to apply only via Helmholtz Institute Jena and Mainz.



3. Application documents

Applications will only be considered if they are complete and fulfill all the criteria listed below If an incomplete application or a list of biased reviewers is submitted, the Head Office reserves the right to exclude the application from the subsequent selection process.

- The applicant is the hosting Helmholtz Center. The complete application documents² must be submitted to the Helmholtz Association via the **Helmholtz Nextcloud** by the stated deadline (cutoff date). Please submit the digital version of the application as follows:
 - 1. Center cover letter incl. personal career development plan and employment policy upon evaluation (as PDF)
 - 2. Assessable application incl. Cover sheet, CV, list of publications (Annex 1, as PDF)
 - 3. Financial plan (Annex 2, as Excel file)
 - 4. Data Consent (Annex 4, as PDF)
 - 5. List of six independent potential reviewers (Annex 6, as Excel file)
 - 6. University Statement (Annex 3, as PDF)
 - 7. Selection statistics of the host center (Annex 7, as Word file)
 - 8. Confirmation of terms of agreement (Annex 8, as PDF)
- One signed hardcopy must also be sent to the Helmholtz Association Head Office (Ahrstrasse 45, 53175 Bonn, Germany).
- The Helmholtz Centers must hand in their nomination of candidates by the submission deadline stated in the call for applications, submitting all required documents (see checklist in section VI). We urge all candidates to get in touch early on with the contact persons indicated for the relevant Helmholtz Center as the Helmholtz Centers have additional deadlines regarding the internal selection process.
- Each Helmholtz Center carries out a transparent pre-selection process. An account of this process must be included when applications are submitted (see Annex 7 "Selection statistics").
- The Helmholtz Center assists the selected candidates in preparing the **complete** application. Where an application is being resubmitted, developments since the last application are to be described (see Annex 1). Resubmissions are only accepted if after the former presentation of the proposal the selection panel explicitly advised the candidate to resubmit his/her application.
- The partner university should be involved in the selection process at an early stage to allow for joint appointments and integrate the Helmholtz Young Investigator Group leaders into the departments of cooperating universities. Please use the form "University statement" (see Annex 3) concerning the rights and duties of candidates and submit it by **August 31, 2021** at the latest.

3.1 Center cover letter and confirmation of terms of agreement

To be submitted in English, one PDF³

² The university statement can be submitted later (see "IV. Dates and deadlines").

³ If there are multiple application confirmations, please enclose a copy of each.



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.

b) Confirmation of terms of agreement

We kindly ask the Helmholtz Centers to fill out and sign the terms of agreement (see Annex 8).

c) The concept for career development measures and description of the planned evaluation process for possible training

- The activities of Helmholtz Young Investigator Group leaders require complex competencies in various areas of activity such as research, teaching, management, and leadership. To support Young Investigator Group leaders in this task, a career development concept must be drawn up for the candidate. It must address the following aspects:
 - o Individual needs analysis taking into consideration the development levels of the individual, the team, and the organization as well as the professional, methodological, and social competence areas
 - Preparation of a concrete qualification plan, taking into account the needs analysis and specifying the formats of the continuing education offers (such as workshops, coaching, and mentoring).
 - Presentation of career options following a positive interim evaluation, including the tenure offers made to the Helmholtz Young Investigator Group leader in case of a clearly positive evaluation.
 - Interval and responsible persons for regular opportunities to reflect on career and development planning. In particular, a career development interview must be scheduled in the context of the evaluation.

d) The concept for the evaluation procedure:

The procedure and criteria for the planned **evaluation** to continue the project must be explained to the candidate. Please provide a brief description of the planned evaluation procedure.

3.2. Selection statistics

To be submitted in German, one Word file, see Annex 7

Information about the Helmholtz Center's internal pre-selection process.

3.3 Assessable application

To be submitted in English, one PDF, no more than 3 MB

- 1. Cover sheet (see Annex 1)
- 2. Formal and scientific requirements of the application
 - No more than 20 pages (non-adherence will be an exclusion criterion) in English; the 20 pages refer only to the proposal, excluding cover sheet, title pages, CV, and/or publication list. Please use the font Arial 10 pt.
 - Presentation of clearly recognizable work packages, important intermediate steps, and milestones with a timetable.
 - Presentation of the planned cooperation and communication structures. Highlighting the strategic significance of the Helmholtz Young Investigator Group for the Helmholtz Center and the involved partners



- Statement on the connection to the Helmholtz program and the focus of the (prospective) partner university/department; the benefit for both institutions should be presented in detail.
- If the strategic significance is laid out specifically in the scientific part of the application, a short reference to the relevant paragraphs is sufficient.
- 3. Candidate CV
- 4. List of publications incl. H-Index (please highlight peer-reviewed and first-author publications)

3.3 Financial plan

To be submitted in English, as an Excel file, see Annex 2

- Travel expenses can be included under material costs or expenditures.
- No funding will be granted for overheads. Matching funds should not contain overhead costs.
- The Helmholtz Association aims to offer doctoral researchers regular employment contracts, including social security contributions, even though granting fellowships shall remain possible in exceptional cases (see doctoral guidelines). As a norm, doctoral researchers who receive funding from the Initiative and Networking Fund of the President of the Helmholtz Association must be compensated according to the good standard in the scientific field. In general, this means at least 65% of an E 13 TVöD position (collective agreement 13 for civil service employees).

3.4 List of six potential independent reviewers

To be submitted in English, as an Excel file, see Annex 6

Criteria for the selection of unbiased reviewers

Impartiality issues and conflicts of interest may exist concerning the research project, the candidate, or the current and future research institutes the candidate is associated with. Impartiality issues/conflicts of interest may, for example, arise if the reviewer:

- is employed by or plays an active role at a Helmholtz Center.
- was the doctoral supervisor and/or the superior of the candidate.
- has a family relationship or close personal ties or contacts with a researcher involved in the application.
- is in close current or planned scientific cooperation with a researcher involved in the application.
- has been in a dependent employment or supervisory relationship (such as a teacher-student relationship at any level up to and including the postdoc phase) with a researcher involved in the application within the last six years.
- is preparing a proposal or carrying out a project closely related to the candidate's research topic (direct scientific competition).
- has had a joint publication or been actively engaged in cooperative research efforts with a researcher involved in the application within the last five years.
- has engaged in intensive use of the research center's facilities within the last five years.
- is currently or has been in an employment relationship with the respective Helmholtz Center or the current employer within the last five years.
- is or has been involved in an ongoing or failed appointment procedure with any of the university partners involved.
- has personal commercial interests of relevance to the application.



Please name **six potential reviewers** and make sure that at least two of them are women scientists. Please refrain from nominating only the most prominent scientists in your research field, as it may be difficult to get an assessment from them.

Please attach the list of proposed reviewers to the application as a separate Excel sheet (see Annex 6) with complete contact and address data including e-mail addresses. Please **disclose possible points of contact** with the reviewers and sign to confirm that no potential bias is known.

3.5 University statement

To be submitted in English, as a PDF; see Annex 3

- Statement of rights and responsibilities (staff and budget responsibilities, doctoral candidate supervision, teaching responsibilities not exceeding four hours per semester week, access to all necessary resources/infrastructure), following the higher education laws applicable in the relevant federal state;
- Statement regarding a joint appointment to a professorship;
- Statement regarding career prospects should the Young Investigator Group leader wish to continue their career at the university after the funding period ends.

3.6 Data consent

To be submitted in English, as a PDF; see Annex 4

Please submit the signed Data consent as a PDF together with your application.

Please note that the consent to the collection, processing, and use of private data is voluntary and can be revoked at any time in the future. Revocations can be sent to impulsfonds@helmholtz.de. If the use of data is revoked, the data will be deleted or anonymized.



IV. Dates and deadlines

Please contact the Helmholtz Center to obtain the deadline of the internal selection process

May 3, 2021: Deadline for submission of complete application documents by the Helmholtz Centers to the Helmholtz Head Office in Bonn (cutoff date; key date for determining 2-6 years after doctorate) and via the Helmholtz Nextcloud

August 31, 2021: Deadline for submission of the statement by the university to the Helmholtz Head Office in Bonn and online via Helmholtz Nextcloud

October 19-20, 2021: Final selection meeting in Berlin (tentative, changes might occur due to the Covid-19 pandemic)

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

V. Funding phase

1. Funding

Funding is provided based on a grant agreement between the Helmholtz Association and the applying Helmholtz Center (see the contract).

2. Evaluation of the Helmholtz Young Investigator Group

After three years, the Helmholtz Centers conduct an evaluation of the Helmholtz Young Investigator Group – in consultation with the partner university, if applicable. The evaluation results will be the basis for decisions as to whether the fixed-term employment contract will be changed to a permanent contract.

The planned evaluation process for the Helmholtz Young Investigator Group must be described in the career development concept and made available to the candidate. The position that will be offered to the candidate in case of an unreservedly positive evaluation must be specified in this plan. During the evaluation, the Helmholtz Center must meet with the Young Investigator Group leader to discuss his/her career. The schedule for the meeting must be stated in the concept for career development measures (see above) and has to be documented.

Following an unreservedly positive evaluation, the candidate will be offered a permanent employment contract by a Helmholtz Center – if possible, with staff responsibility – without having to submit a new application. The decision to grant a permanent position will be made based on a quality assessment of the candidate's scientific achievements according to international standards. The examination procedure will be carried out by the host Helmholtz Center with substantial participation by external reviewers.

The evaluation report alongside a corresponding statement from the Helmholtz Center regarding future career development has to be submitted to the head office of the Helmholtz Association.

3. Additional support during family phases

During a family phase, group leaders who take parental leave or work part-time can apply for additional funding from the Initiative and Networking Fund for a temporary deputy leader (postdoc according to the DFG rate) to supervise the group (to the extent possible), allowing a seamless continuation of the research project.

4. Open science publication

By accepting funding from the Initiative and Networking Fund of the Helmholtz Association, scientists 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. If good reasons are presented, open science publications may be waived. These reasons must be reported to the Helmholtz Association as soon as they come to light.

VI. Checklist of documents to be submitted

Check	Element of the application	Format	Relevant annex
	 Center cover letter Letter of support from the board The concept for career development measures The description of the planned evaluation process 	In English, as one PDF ⁴	N/A
	 Assessable application Cover sheet The scientific part of the application (max. 20 pages) The strategic significance of the Young Investigator Group for the Helmholtz Center and the relevant partners Candidate CV List of publications and citation index 	in English, one PDF, no more than 3 MB	Annex 1 Annex 4
	List of six independent potential reviewers	in English as an Excel file	Annex 6
	Financial plan	in English as an Excel file	Annex 2
	University statement	in English, as PDF	Annex 3
	Selection statistics	in German, as Word File	Annex 7
	Confirmation of terms of agreement	in English, as PDF	Annex 8

⁴ If there are multiple confirmations for several applications, please enclose a copy of each.



VII. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What if I do not fulfill the eligibility criteria (2-6 years after receiving a doctorate, substantial international research experience)?

Candidates who do not fulfill these requirements are advised not to apply (the cutoff date is the deadline for submission of complete applications by the Helmholtz Centers to the Helmholtz Head Office in Bonn). If a Helmholtz Center would like to submit an application for such an individual, a written statement including meaningful justification must be submitted to the Helmholtz Head Office before the application deadline. Funding will only be provided in particularly well-justified cases.

The Helmholtz Young Investigator Groups program is primarily a recruiting instrument. Candidates who are already employed at a Helmholtz Center can be nominated, but they must demonstrate international experience, competitiveness, and mobility to a special degree. Researchers who have been employed at a Helmholtz Center for some time are not the primary target group of the program.

Does evidence have to be provided for child-rearing periods?

It is sufficient to note the doctorate date and the children's dates of birth on the CV and the cover sheet. Childrearing periods within the period in question are recognized at two years for each child under the age of 12.

Which academic certificates should I submit?

All academic certificates except for your Bachelors, Masters, Doctorate should be submitted.

Is a general confirmation by the Center sufficient, or is an additional supporting letter from the Young Investigator Group's intended host institute necessary?

A letter of support from the direct superior is not required. The accompanying cover letter of the board of the Helmholtz Center is sufficient.

What are the requirements for the written statement by the university/department?

The letter from the university should be signed by high-ranking officials (President, Vice-Chancellor, and Dean, including official stamp). All the points listed in the University statement form can be found in Annex 3.

Is cooperation with international partners allowed?

As a rule, such cooperation is allowed. However, funding can neither be used for personnel costs nor investments at institutions abroad.

Are new group leaders obliged to participate in the Helmholtz Leadership Academy's "Leading your Group" course?

Yes, participation within the first two years of their funding period is mandatory. This course was designed especially for the new Helmholtz Association Young Investigator Group leaders. The curriculum ideally prepares participants for their new leadership responsibilities and supports them in successfully developing their group. The course is offered in German and in English on an alternating schedule. Further information is available at www.helmholtz.de/academy and here 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.

What are the selection criteria?

- Excellent candidate quality: curriculum vitae, publications, citation index, awards, and more
- The excellence of the planned research project: innovation capacity, relevance; structure, coherence, and feasibility
- Strategic importance for the nominating institution (the hosting Helmholtz Center) and discernible synergy
 effects resulting from the cooperation between the Center and the partner university.

When can I expect an invitation to a selection interview?

If you are successful in passing the written stage of the selection process, you will be invited to present your proposal at the selection meeting. Your hosting Helmholtz Center will be informed with about four weeks' prior notice. We will provide the invited candidates with a briefing shortly thereafter.

When is the final decision made?

Your hosting Helmholtz Center will be informed of the funding decision no more than two days after the selection meeting. The successful candidates will be notified by the Helmholtz Centers shortly thereafter.



VIII. 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

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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.