

Call for applications

May 17, 2021

Helmholtz Distinguished Professorship – Funding for the recruitment of leading international women scientists (W3)

from resources of the Joint Initiative for Research
and Innovation



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Full professorship positions are a defining element of any research institution. As joint appointments with universities, they are also an important link between the non-university research organization Helmholtz and its university partners. Within the framework of the *Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation*, the Helmholtz Association is intensifying its efforts to attract outstanding women scientists from abroad to these positions. Together with its funding bodies, it is continuing its successful recruitment initiative of recent years under the Helmholtz Distinguished Professorship program.

1. Goal of the funding

The fundamental goal of the program is to attract a top-level group of exceptionally qualified, experienced, internationally recognized women scientists to the Helmholtz Association. The strategic objectives of the Helmholtz Distinguished Professorship program are to enhance Helmholtz internationalization, to increase the proportion of women leaders in our research centers, to strengthen cooperation with partner universities, and to establish and expand strategically relevant thematic areas by means of targeted recruitment. With respect to the target group, the central objectives are to support the appointment of outstanding women scientists with an international reputation at the W3 professorship level and to create reliable career prospects by funding permanent appointments. The program's resources also create scope for financing and equipping the newly recruited scientists and expanding the options of the recruiting Helmholtz Centers and partner universities for generating additional positions.

2. Purpose and duration of the funding

Up to three Helmholtz Distinguished Professorship positions will be funded within this call. The funding volume amounts to 600,000 Euros per scientist and year and increases the basic funding of the recruiting Helmholtz Center. The Helmholtz Center and partner university are expected to provide additional financial resources of substantial amount. The funding can be used to finance the position of the women 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 scientist who is awarded a Helmholtz Distinguished Professorship and recruited to a Helmholtz Center 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 pro-

grams will be granted accordingly for the duration of the employment contract at the respective Helmholtz Center.¹ 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 is aimed at highly distinguished women scientists with an international reputation who are currently conducting research at institutions abroad and who are recognized leaders in their respective research field. This may also include women researchers of German nationality who have been employed abroad in the last years (generally for at least the last three years).

A fundamental prerequisite for the funding is that the nominated candidates are not yet employed at the Helmholtz Center when the application is submitted. The funding program targets outstanding women scientists who are currently (that is, at the time the application is submitted) conducting research at institutions abroad. Another important prerequisite for the funding is that the nominated candidate has not received an offer for the professorship position at the partner university (so-called “Ruferteilung”) until after the Helmholtz Distinguished Professorship selection meeting. Nevertheless, it is recommended to start discussing the joint appointment with the relevant partner university as soon as possible and to reach specific agreements regarding the next steps in the appointment procedure before the selection meeting. In any case, this will accelerate the planned appointment.

4. Selection criteria

The most important selection criterion is the outstanding scientific performance of the nominated applicants (CV, publications, citation index, awards, etc.). Other criteria are:

- originality of the planned research work,
- an outstanding international reputation of the candidate,
- complementarity of the candidate’s research profile with the applying Helmholtz Center and the research program,
- adequate matching funds provided by the Helmholtz Center
- the joint commitment of the Helmholtz Center and the partner university to ensure the successful recruitment and establishment of the candidate as a professor. It is imperative that aspects of equipment, but also additional offers (such as dual-career measures) and structural concerns

¹ The Helmholtz Association does not invest its resources in individual institutions, but in cross-center research programs that compete with one another for funding. By pooling the diverse resources of its various research centers via the so-called “program-oriented funding”, Helmholtz is in the unique position of not only being able to offer solutions to individual problems, but also to comprehensively address the complex issues facing science, society, and the economy and to develop system solutions. For more information, please see <https://www.helmholtz.de/en/research/program-oriented-funding/>.

(such as support for integration into university departments) are taken into account. A signed declaration of intent by the university management must be attached to the application. The current status and further plans for the appointment procedure must be outlined in agreement with the partner university.

5. Application and selection procedure

This call for applications will be issued internationally. The application and selection procedure involves the following steps (see also **Annex 6**):

1. Interested women scientists should approach the respective Helmholtz Center directly and get in touch with the contact persons indicated (see **Annex 5**). At the same time, the Helmholtz Centers are invited to actively recruit suitable candidates.
2. The Helmholtz Centers are encouraged to organize an internal pre-selection process and enter into negotiations with their partner universities.
3. 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.
4. At least two written reviews from international peers will be solicited by the Helmholtz Head Office for each application.
5. 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.
6. 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 procedure's next step.
7. The final selection will be based on the recommendation of an independent, interdisciplinary panel of international experts. Invitations for the candidates to a personal presentation will be forwarded at least six weeks before the date of the selection meeting.
8. The Helmholtz Centers' Boards of Directors will be informed about the results of the funding decision within two working days after the candidate's presentation at the selection meeting.
9. The selected candidates must be appointed as professors not later than 18 months after funding has been approved. Otherwise, the funding expires.
10. 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

October 1, 2021: Deadline for submission of complete applications by the Helmholtz Centers to the Helmholtz Head Office in Berlin

February 1, 2022: Deadline for submission of the statement by the partner university to the Helmholtz Head Office in Berlin

March 10, 2022: 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

Annex 1 is a template for preparing the application. **Using this template is a formal prerequisite** for application submission. A further prerequisite is that **all components** of the application **must be written in English**. In detail, the following documentation must be submitted:

I. Letter from the Helmholtz Centers' Boards of Directors (separate document, English, PDF)

We ask that the letter from the Helmholtz Centers' Boards of Directors is written in English. The letter from the Board 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 the arrangements with the candidate and the partner university

II. Assessable application (based on the [application template](#) with the following structure and components, English, one PDF)

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 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

6. Financial plan

- 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.
- financing contributions by the Helmholtz Center, financing contributions by the partner university (if applicable) and funding from resources of the Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation
- **Note:** The financial plan must be submitted as **Excel file** (see **Annex 2**) as well as **part of the written application** (see **Annex 1**: application template, chapter 6.1 and 6.2).

7. Publications and patents

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

8. Declaration of consent regarding data protection

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

10. Letters of reference from Helmholtz external experts (English, PDF) (max. 2 pages each)

III. Proposal of six unbiased reviewers in the relevant field (separate document, English, PDF)

Please consider the notes in **Annex 3** (to be signed by the nominated candidate) and use **Annex 4** (Excel file) for listing six unbiased potential reviewers.

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 both as original and electronically to the Helmholtz Head Office in Berlin by February 1, 2022 at the latest.

Applications will only be considered if they are complete and fulfill all the criteria listed above. 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.

Applications must be submitted as **original hardcopies** by the Board of Directors of the Helmholtz Center to the President of the Helmholtz Association at the **Helmholtz Head Office** in **Berlin**, Anna-Louisa-Karsch-Str. 2, 10178 Berlin, Germany and **sent by e-mail** to impulsfonds@helmholtz.de by **October 1, 2021** at the latest (with exception of the partner university statement, which must be submitted by February 1, 2022 at the latest).

8. List of annexes

Annex 1: Application template (Word file, mandatory use)

Annex 2: Financial plan (Excel file, mandatory use)

Annex 3: Declaration with regard to the proposal of six unbiased reviewers in the relevant field

Annex 4: List of six unbiased potential reviewers (Excel file, mandatory use)

Annex 5: Contact persons at the Helmholtz Centers

Annex 6: Overview of the application and selection procedure

Annex 7: Frequently asked questions (FAQ)

Annex 8: Data protection compulsory information