

Call for applications

January 31, 2020

Helmholtz Distinguished Professorship – Funding to recruit top-level international women scientists (W3)

from resources of the Joint Initiative for Research
and Innovation



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

A. Goal of the funding

The fundamental goal of the funding instrument is to attract a top-level group of experienced, internationally recognized women scientists to Helmholtz and thus better take advantage of the potential of outstanding women scientists. The strategic objectives of the Helmholtz Distinguished Professorship program are to enhance Helmholtz internationalization, increase the proportion of women at the upper levels of Helmholtz management, strengthen cooperation with partner universities, and 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 excellent women scientists with an international reputation at the W3 professorship level and create reliable career prospects by funding only 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 creating additional positions.

B. Purpose and duration of the funding

The funding volume amounts to 600,000 euros per scientist per year and increases the basic funding of the recruiting Helmholtz Center. The funding can be used to finance the position and the relevant equipment. An essential prerequisite for funding is a concept for the use of the funds that details their deployment and, if applicable, additional services provided by the Helmholtz Center and the partner university. The jointly appointing institutions are expressly encouraged to come up with innovative offers to attract the target group (dual-career measures, onboarding offers, etc.).

If funding is granted, the successful appointment as professor (submission of the certificate of appointment) is a prerequisite for transferring funds to the budget of the recruiting Helmholtz Center. The funds are earmarked for this purpose and will be withdrawn if the person leaves during the first period of the Program-Oriented Funding in which she is recruited (de facto the program period starting in 2021) and if the Center fails to fill the vacancy with another candidate who meets the criteria.

C. Target group

The funding program is aimed at highly distinguished women scientists with an international reputation who are currently conducting research at foreign institutions and who are recognized leaders in their respective field. This may also include women researchers of German nationality who have worked

abroad in the last years (generally for at least the last three years). The Helmholtz Association stands for scientific excellence and expects successful candidates to demonstrate the same.

A fundamental prerequisite for the funding is that the nominated candidates are not yet employed at the Helmholtz Center submitting the application at the time of submission. The funding program is rather aimed at outstanding women scientists who are currently (that is, at the time the application is submitted) conducting research at foreign institutions. Another important prerequisite for the funding is that the nominated candidate does not receive an offer for the professorship position at the partner university (so-called "Ruferteilung") before the Helmholtz Distinguished Professorship selection meeting. Nevertheless, it is recommended to start with the discussions with the relevant partner university regarding a joint appointment as soon as possible and to reach specific agreements regarding the next steps in the desired appointment procedure before the selection meeting. In any case, this will accelerate the planned appointment.

D. Funding criteria

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

- Originality of the planned research work,
- An excellent international reputation on the part of the candidate,
- Suitability of the candidate's research profile with the applying Helmholtz Center and the research program,
- The joint commitment of the Helmholtz Center and the partner university to ensure the successful recruitment and establishment of the candidate. It is imperative that aspects of equipment, but also additional offers (such as dual-career measures) and structural concerns (such as support for integration into university departments) are taken into account. A declaration of intent certified by the signature of the university management must be attached to the application. The current status and further plans for the appointment procedure must be outlined by the partner university.

E. Application procedure

The call for research topic-independent applications will be issued internationally.

The application procedure involves several steps (see **Annex 5**):

1. Interested women scientists should contact the Helmholtz Centers directly and get in touch with the contact persons indicated (see **Annex 4**). Conversely, the Helmholtz Centers are called upon to actively recruit suitable candidates.
2. 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 obtained for each application.
5. In the event that the program is greatly oversubscribed, the President reserves the right to make a pre-selection on the basis of the written reviewer appraisals that have been obtained.
6. Not later than six weeks before the meeting of the reviewer 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 decision will be based on the recommendation of an independent, interdisciplinary panel of experts. Invitations for the candidates to give a personal presentation will be issued via the applying Helmholtz Centers about six weeks before the date of the selection meeting.
8. After the candidate's presentation at the selection meeting, the Helmholtz Centers' Boards of Directors will be informed of the results of the funding decision.
9. The selected candidates must be appointed as professors not later than 18 months after funding has been approved. Otherwise, the funding lapses.
10. Funding will be transferred to the budget of the recruiting Helmholtz Center after a copy of the certificate of appointment 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.

F. Dates and deadlines

June 12, 2020: Deadline for submission of complete applications by the Helmholtz Centers to the Helmholtz Head Office in Berlin

October 9, 2020: Deadline for submission of the statement by the partner university to the Helmholtz Head Office in Berlin

November 4 and 5, 2020: Final selection meeting in Berlin

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

G. 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.** Specifically, 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, suitability for the Helmholtz program, and relevance to the research field,
- Resources commitment with reference to 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 / 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 Center and funding from resources of the Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation.

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 2** and use **Annex 3** (Excel sheet) for listing the expert proposals.

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 October 9, 2020 at the latest.

Applications must be submitted as **single original copies** 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 Daniel Riesenberg (daniel.riesenberg@helmholtz.de) by **June 12, 2020 at the latest** (with exception of the partner university statement, which must be submitted by October 9, 2020 at the latest).

Annexes

Annex 1: Application template (mandatory use)

Annex 2: Declaration with regard to the proposal of six unbiased reviewers in the relevant field

Annex 3: List of six unbiased potential reviewers

Annex 4: Contact persons at the Helmholtz Centers

Annex 5: Overview of the selection procedure

Annex 6: Frequently asked questions

Annex 7: Information about the processing of personal data in the application and assessment procedure