

EIPOD4



2021 EMBL Interdisciplinary Postdocs4 (EIPOD4) Guide to Applicants

Call deadline: September 7th, 2021

Disclaimer: This guide has no legal value in itself. The information contained within may not be used as a grounds for appeal.



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1 Programme Overview

1.1 Programme description

The **European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL)** is an intergovernmental research organisation and centre of excellence for life sciences in Europe. EMBL's 1800+ staff members originate from over 80 countries; 43% are active researchers. EMBL's 6 sites located in 5 countries focus on molecular, cellular and developmental biology (Heidelberg), structural biology (Grenoble, Hamburg), epigenetics and neurobiology (Rome), tissue biology and disease modelling (Barcelona), and bioinformatics (Cambridge). Research at EMBL is supported by excellent core facilities, bioinformatics and structural biology services, training for scientists at all career stages and the EMBL course and conference programme.

EIPOD4 is an international postdoctoral fellowship programme embedded in EMBL's unique interdisciplinary and collaborative research environment. It builds on previous versions of the successful EIPOD and is designed to support the increasing diversity of career paths in Europe's research landscape. The programme offers a novel and unique set of options for postdoctoral research. Fellows are based at EMBL and receive 3-year contracts to work on self-designed interdisciplinary research projects. Projects involve at least two EMBL groups. Additional external partners from academia, industry, clinics and museums may also participate in EIPOD projects. Positions are based at EMBL but fellows may spend up to 6 months in the external partner laboratory.

The programme has 3 main tracks:



- i) The **Academic Track** is designed for fellows largely interested in pursuing a classical academic career.
- ii) The **Industry Track** supports interdisciplinary research projects involving an industry partner or applied research projects.
- iii) The **Clinical Track** targets MD/PhDs who aspire to work as physician scientists and fellows with a strong interest in biomedical research.

Collectively, the tracks provide fellows with valuable interdisciplinary research training and strong inter-sectorial exposure. Fellows choose their track based on their research interests and future career goals.



1.2 Training

EIPOD4 fellows complete a well-balanced mandatory training programme focused on transferable skills. Workshops cover career development, gender and diversity, intellectual property and entrepreneurship, ethics and research integrity and open science initiatives (i.e. open access journals, the principles of FAIR and management/repository of big data). In addition to the mandatory training, fellows complete two additional trainings of their choice based on their future career goals and interests. This can come from one of many track specific offers (see figure below) or from EMBL's Professional Training and Development and Scientific Skills programmes which offer a large and diverse range of courses including IT, language, project management, personal efficiency courses, grant writing, leadership and more.



1.3 Public Engagement



The public engagement partner for the EIPOD4 programme is the Natural History Museum (NHM; London, England). Their public engagement team has extensive experience in communicating science to the public and training scientists to do so effectively. They will provide EIPOD4 fellows with public engagement training. Following the training, fellows will contribute to one of the NHM's existing public outreach activities at the museum. Fellows complete one additional outreach activity of their choice. Here they can contribute to an existing activity at EMBL or may develop their own outreach activity.



EIPOD4 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT (2.5 days)

training by the Natural History Museum (NHM)

one additional outreach activity of choice

participation in an outreach event at the NHM

1.4 Career Development Support

EIPODs have access to a personalised **career development service**. Together with the programme's Career Advisor, they establish a personal career development plan to define career goals and overcome personal and/or scientific weaknesses. EIPOD4 fellows wishing to leave academic research can explore non-academic career opportunities via a **novel career secondment scheme (see details below)**. Additionally, mentoring is provided on multiple levels. This includes guidance from the group leaders involved in the research projects, from other faculty at EMBL via an established Second Mentor Programme and as part of the EIPODs Inspire scheme described below.

EIPOD4 CAREER DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

personalised career development plans

1 to1 career support

career events/workshops

access to structured career information

career blog

career secondment scheme

EIPODs Inspire mentoring scheme

conference funds

Career Secondment Scheme: EIPODs interested in scientific positions outside of academia can explore opportunities after completion of their 36-month EIPOD positions via internships of their choice (max. 2 months). To be eligible fellows must have completed the programme's training and public outreach activities and confirm their internship position with the career advisor.

EIPODs Inspire scheme: EIPOD fellows are paired with Master students from across Europe identified via a merit-based selection procedure. The pairs participate in a mentoring workshop offered at EMBL and then interact regularly during a mentoring period of 1.5 years. EIPOD fellows may also visit their mentee and give an institutional seminar.

2.1 Who can apply to the EIPOD4 programme?

Experienced researchers with diverse educational backgrounds (e.g. life sciences, mathematics, chemistry, physics, engineering) who are passionate about pursuing ambitious interdisciplinary research projects in an international setting



Eligibility

Academic requirements: Applicants must have completed a PhD at the date of recruitment or have 4 years of full-time equivalent research experience.

Mobility requirements: The EIPOD4 programme is open to experienced researchers of all nationalities. Prior affiliation with EMBL is permitted provided that an applicant has not worked at EMBL for more than 12 months in the 3 years prior to the application deadline. This includes visitors' contracts.

2.2 Application process

Applications to the EIPOD4 fellowship programme are only accepted via the programme's online application platform (<https://erecruit.embl.de/eipod-app/>).

To apply for the programme:

- Open an online application (<https://erecruit.embl.de/eipod-app/>)
- Develop an interdisciplinary project idea: see i)
- Contact an EMBL host to discuss your project *idea*: see ii)
- Choose an EMBL partner: see iii)
- Choose an external research partner if relevant: see iv)
- Complete and submit the online application. Note: the project proposal (see i) and letter of support from the EMBL project host (see ii) and, if relevant, external partners (see iii) must be uploaded in the relevant sections of the online application.
- Make sure that your referees submit their references by the call deadline: see v)

i) Project Requirements

Applicants must develop and submit a self-defined interdisciplinary research project that allows them to gain new interdisciplinary skills. Projects must be hosted by an EMBL Project Host and one or more project partners at EMBL (see ii and iii). In addition, external partners from academia, industry, clinics and museums (see iv) may participate. Projects proposals must use the [provided template available here](#). The following sections are included in the template:

- Start page with project details (1 page)
- Background and significance of the project (approximately ¼ page)
- Project aims (approximately ¼ page)
- Project description (maximum 2 pages including 1 figure)
- The contributions from all involved groups with an emphasis on the interdisciplinary expertise provided. Please also specify what skills you will bring to the project and what new interdisciplinary skills you will gain by completing it. (approximately ½ page)
- References (maximum ½ page)

Important note: Project proposals not using the provided template or which exceed the 5-page limit are ineligible and will not be evaluated.



ii) EMBL hosts

To identify suitable EMBL hosts for research projects, EMBL faculty can be searched by [research topic on the EIPOD4 programme web pages](#). Applicants should check to make sure the EMBL faculty they are interested in are participating in the open call. Contact the relevant EMBL faculty to discuss your project ideas. A letter of support from the main EMBL host is required as part of the submitted application. A confirmation letter template to be signed by the EMBL host stating that she or he supports your project can be downloaded here (add link).

iii) EMBL Partners

Projects require at least one EMBL partner. If you are not sure who would be suitable for your project you can discuss with the EMBL host. Most participating EMBL hosts have suggested EMBL and external collaborators (see collaborator link for the EMBL host you are interested in on [the participating faculty page](#)).

iv) *External Research Partner Requirements*

Applicants to the Academic track may include an external partner at the application stage or during the active phase of the project. For the Industry and Clinical track, an external research partner from the respective sector is required at the application stage. The choice of external partners is yours. [Participating faculty](#) also highlight their collaboration partners that may be relevant during an open call. External partners must also sign letters of support ([download template letter here](#)) that applicants submit as part of their application

v) *References*

Please make sure to complete and save the referee section in the online application as soon as possible after opening your application. Your referees will be contacted to complete the online reference form as soon as this section of the application is saved regardless of whether your application has been submitted or not. This provides references with the maximum amount of time to complete their reference. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that their referees complete the online reference by the call deadline. Please note that your referees can access the online reference form until the call deadline even if you have already submitted your application.

2.3 Call Schedule

EIPOD4 has one annual call for applications. The 2021 call is open from June 15th until September 7th, 2021. Key dates in the 2021 call are summarized in the table below

Table 1: 2021 EIPOD Interview Dates

Date(s) for the 2021 EIPOD4 call	Description
June 15 th - September 7 th	Call is open
September 8 th - 16 th	Eligibility check of submitted applications and assignment of expert evaluators.



September 16 th – September 28 th	Evaluation of eligible applications by EMBL and external experts
October 8 th	Short-listing Meeting
October 12 th	EIPOD office sends out invitations to interview. Candidates who are not shortlisted are informed.
Prior to November 29 th (exact timing pending discussion with involved EMBL faculty)	Candidates with EMBL faculty from Barcelona, EMBL-EBI, Grenoble, Hamburg and/or Rome involved in their projects visit the respective lab.
November 29 th during the day (exact timing pending discussion with involved EMBL faculty)	Interviewing candidates with EMBL Heidelberg faculty involved in their projects visit the labs.
November 29 th (starting at 16:45)	Welcome event for interviewing candidates
November 30 th and December 1 st	Interviews at EMBL Heidelberg for all interviewing candidates.
December 8 th	Interviewed candidates are informed of the outcome of the interviews

3. Review process

3.1 Eligibility check: After the call closes submitted applications are checked for eligibility by the EIPOD4 programme manager. To be eligible applications must:

- Be submitted via the programme’s online application platform (<https://erecruit.embl.de/eipod-app/#!login>).
- meet the programme’s academic and mobility requirements (see section 2.1)
- have two submitted reference letters due at by the call deadline
- have a letter of support from the EMBL host
- have a letter of support from external partners if there are external partners on the project (note: an external partner is optional for the academic track but mandatory for both the industry and clinical tracks)

Applications that meet the eligibility requirements are evaluated (see 3.2). For those that do not, the applicants are notified by the programme manager.

3.2 Evaluation of applications:

Scoring and thresholds: EIPOD4 is a competitive merit-based fellowship programme. It follows a well-defined weighted scoring system that is unbiased and transparent. Eligible applications are independently reviewed by two EMBL group leaders and two external experts. Evaluators are asked to provide an overall impression of a **candidate’s application** in terms of excellence and interdisciplinarity as described below and in Table 2.

Excellence: Scientific excellence is assessed at the level of the individual researcher and of the proposed project.

Interdisciplinarity: In the application form, candidates indicate which skills they will bring to their projects



and importantly, what new skills they will gain. Project proposals are likewise evaluated to ensure they are interdisciplinary.

Table 2: Weighted scoring system used for evaluation

Excellence		Interdisciplinarity	
<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Project</i>
Academic performance	Clarity of written project	Gain of interdisciplinary skills	Interdisciplinary approach
Reference letters (2)	Timeliness		
Research experience and technical skills	Feasibility		
Scientific Interests			
Weighting			
40%	20%	20%	20%
Threshold			
70% of max. score			

Each section is scored out of 4. The result of the weighted scoring shown in the table above is a mark out of 4 with the following values: 4 (outstanding); 3 (very good); 2 (good); 1 (average/below average). Each application is evaluated by 2 EMBL Faculty and 2 external evaluators. The results of the 4 evaluations are averaged to arrive at a final mark for each candidate. The short-listing committee uses the scores to generate the short-list for interviews and a ranked waiting list.

3.3 Interviews

Lab visits: Interviewing candidates visit the EMBL labs involved in the proposed projects.

Interviews: The interviews take place approximately 12 weeks after the call closes. Candidates give an open talk on their research accomplishments (10 minutes) and have a closed panel interview (30 minutes per candidate). The interviews for the 2021 EIPOD call will take place on Tuesday, November 30th and Wednesday, December 1st, 2021.

3.4 Results

Funding decision by the Offer Committee

The offer committee establishes a list of offers and a ranked waiting list based on the interview scores. Interviewing candidates are informed of the outcome of their interview by email within 1 week of the official interviews which includes individualized feedback.

3.5 Appeal procedure

Applicants not put forward following the eligibility check or short-listing or who do not receive an offer following the interviews have the right to request an appeal. The details of the appeal procedure are included in the outcome email. Only procedural aspects of the evaluation and selection are open to appeal. The



scientific judgement of the evaluators and panels is not. Requests for appeal must be submitted by email to the Programme Manager using the appeal form included with the outcome email within 7 days of a candidate receiving a rejection. Appeal requests will be treated confidentially and are reviewed by an Appeals Committee.

4. Fellowship conditions

EIPOD4 fellows receive an initial contract for 3 years. MD/PhDs in the clinical track can define the length of their fellowship (1.5-3 years) based upon their individual needs. Fellows can stay at EMBL for a total of 5 years, provided that the Project Host has additional funds. The conditions of employment, as detailed in the work contracts, are summarised below. Further details can be found on [the programme pages](#).

Living allowance: Generous monthly salary calculated based on the EMBL duty site and subject to annual increases.

Social security: Fellows are part of an obligatory social security system consisting of a pension scheme, health insurance, accident at work insurance and unemployment insurance. Both the pension and unemployment insurances are portable.

Leave: Fellows receive 2.5 days of leave per month of service. In addition, they receive sick leave, maternity leave, paternity leave and special leave (i.e. for adoption of a child, fostering a child, entering into a union, death in the family, civil duties, to nurse a dependent child)

Additional insurances: Optional death benefit and long-term care insurances are available.

Allowances: Fellows in a union receive a monthly dependent allowance regardless of the employment status of their partner. For every dependent child, they also receive a children allowance.

5. Data protection and ethical considerations

Data protection

EMBL ensures a high level of data protection and complies with EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) regulations. The institute's data protection framework including its internal policy on general data protection is [available here](#).

Ethical considerations

Successful projects are screened by the Ethics Committee for ethical considerations based on the EC's guidelines and EMBL's own internal policies. Projects requiring ethical approvals must have these in place prior to a fellow beginning their project.

6. EIPOD4 Information webinar for interested applicants

The EIPOD Office will provide an interactive webinar for interested applicants prior to the open call. This will include a short presentation on the EIPOD4 programme and how to apply. Participants will have the opportunity to ask question. The date of the 2021 EIPOD call webinar is:

-Friday June 11th, 9:30 CEST. Please use the link below to register for the event.



Link to register for the information webinar:

https://embl-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_mh0Qp8kGTNa0uPr8yfw3Lw

A recording of the webinar will be made available to applicants [on the programme pages](#).

7. EIPOD Office Contact Information

Do you have additional questions? Get in touch with the EIPOD Office:

EIPOD Office

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