



**EMBL Interdisciplinary Postdocs - Exploring Life in Context
EIPOD-LinC
2023 Guide to Applicants**

Call deadline: February 20th, 2024

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 summary

The **European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL)** is an intergovernmental research organisation and centre of excellence for the life sciences in Europe. EMBL's 1900+ staff members originate from over 90 countries and work across 6 sites located in 5 countries: France (Grenoble), Germany (Heidelberg, Hamburg), Italy (Rome), Spain (Barcelona), UK (Cambridge). EMBL research is interdisciplinary spanning a range of biological disciplines to advance life science research. This includes structural biology, bioinformatics and computational biology, microbiology, tissue and organ biology, neurobiology, developmental biology, genome biology, cell biology and molecular medicine.

EMBL's newest research programme, Molecules to Ecosystems, aims to understand the basis of life, gaining a molecular understanding of organisms in the context of different environments. From exploring the molecular components inside a cell to studying whole populations and ecosystems, EMBL scientists will explore these different scales through eight research themes that foster collaborative, multidisciplinary research: **Molecular Building Blocks, Cellular and Multicellular Dynamics, Microbial Ecosystems, Infection Biology, Human Ecosystems, Planetary Biology, Data Sciences, and Theory@EMBL**. The goal of the programme is to drive understanding of life on earth and inform potential solutions to society's biggest challenges such as irreversible loss of biodiversity, antimicrobial resistance, pollution, climate change, food security and emergent pathogens.

EIPOD-LinC 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 programmes and is designed to support the increasing diversity of career paths in Europe's research landscape. Fellows work on self-designed interdisciplinary research projects in the context of the EMBL research programme: Molecules to Ecosystems. Projects must be related to one or more of [the research themes that define the new programme \(see above\)](#).

All projects require an EMBL host and a partner. The partner may come from EMBL or from an academic institute, clinic or industry located in an [EMBL Member State, Associate Member State or Prospective Member State \(MS\)](#). The participation of EMBL and external labs from different sectors provide fellows with valuable interdisciplinary research training and strong inter-sectorial exposure. Fellows choose the type of research project they would like to work on and the combination of research groups to best enable their projects based on their research interests and future career goals. Importantly, projects must allow candidates to gain new skills contributing to interdisciplinary research skill sets.

Fellows are based at EMBL and receive 3-year contracts to work on their self-designed interdisciplinary research projects. Fellows with a MS partner are expected to actively engage with their partner lab spending between 3-months and 1-year in the MS lab. Fellows who spend 1 year in the MS lab qualify for a 6-month extension of their fellowship.

1.2 Training

EIPOD-LinC fellows complete a well-balanced mandatory training programme focused on transferable skills important for scientists. Workshops cover career development (see 1.4),

research integrity/good scientific practice and open science and data management initiatives. In addition, fellows complete three trainings of their choice based on their future career goals and interests. These can come from EMBL's Professional Training and Development and [Complementary Scientific Skills](#) programmes which offer a diverse range of courses including IT, language, project management, personal efficiency courses, grant writing, leadership and more.

1.3 Public Engagement

EMBL is committed to sharing its science with the general public, policy makers and other target groups. EIPOD-LinC Fellows complete public engagement training as well as 1 activity during the course of their fellowship. They may contribute to one the many activities organised by EMBL's [Science Education and Public Engagement Office](#). Alternatively, they can put forward a suggestion of an activity to the EIPOD Programme Office for approval.

1.4 Career Development Support

Fellows have access to professional career development support via [the EMBL Fellows Career Service](#). This includes 1-to-1 career guidance sessions, access to career development resources and workshops and trainings. They establish and regularly update personal career development plans to define career goals and to work on personal and/or scientific weaknesses. Furthermore, they take part in 1 or more career workshops of their choice during their fellowship time. Mentoring is provided on multiple levels. This includes guidance from the group leaders involved in the research projects, from other faculty at EMBL and via an established Second Mentor Programme. Conference funding to support participation in a conference is also available for use once the training, career development and outreach activities have been completed.

2 Eligibility criteria and application

2.1 Who can apply to the EIPOD-LinC programme?

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

Eligibility requirements for applicants

Academic requirements: Applicants must have a Ph.D. by the call deadline. Researchers who have successfully defended their doctoral thesis but who have not yet been formally awarded the doctoral degree are eligible to apply.

Mobility requirements: Prior association (including visitor contracts) of a postdoctoral candidate with EMBL and/or a MS partner is compatible with application to the programme but cannot exceed 12 months within the last 3 years prior to the submission deadline. Any previous association must be indicated on the application form.

2.2 Application process

Applications 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 a)
- Contact an EMBL host to discuss your project idea (see b)
- Choose an EMBL partner or a MS partner (see c)
- Complete and submit the online application. Note: the project proposal (see a) and letter of support from the EMBL project host (see b) and, if relevant, MS partners (see c) must be uploaded in the relevant sections of the online application.
- Make sure that your referees submit their references by the call deadline (see d)

a) *Project Requirements*

Applicants must develop and submit a self-defined interdisciplinary research project under the overarching theme of Exploring Life in Context and related to one or more of the programme themes (see 1.1). The project should allow the researcher to gain new research skills contributing to an interdisciplinary research skill set in line with the goals of the programme. Projects must have an EMBL Project Host and a partner. The project partner may come from EMBL or from an [EMBL Member State, Associate Member State or Prospect Member State](#) (see c). 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 $\frac{3}{4}$ page)
- Project aims (approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ page)
- Project description (maximum 2 pages including 1 figure)
- The contributions from all involved groups with an emphasis on the interdisciplinary expertise provided. A Gantt chart should be included showing how the fellowship time will be split between the involved labs (approximately 1 page)
- Impact of the project for the field(s). Please also comment on how the project relates to the theme: exploring life in context (approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ page)
- The impact of the programme and project for you as a researcher and for the involved labs (approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ page)
- References (not included in page count)
- Indicate which EMBL programme themes most closely related to your project (not included in page count)

Important note: Project proposals not using the provided template or which exceed the page limit (see project template) are ineligible and will not be evaluated.

b) EMBL hosts

To identify suitable EMBL hosts for research projects, EMBL faculty can be searched by research topic (<https://www.embl.org/research/>). 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](#).

c) Project Partners

Projects require at least one partner. The partner can come from EMBL or from an academic institute, industry or clinic located in an EMBL Member State, Associate Member State or Prospect Member State (<https://www.embl.org/about/member-states/>). MS partners must be actively engaged in research at the level of lab head or equivalent. They should be able to supervise postdocs at their home institution.

If you are not sure who would be suitable for your project you can discuss with the EMBL host. Most participating EMBL hosts have also suggested EMBL and MS collaborators (see collaborator link for the EMBL host you are interested in on the [participating faculty page](#)). MS partners must also sign letters of support ([download template letter here](#)) that applicants submit as part of their application. Please note that partners may not come from institutions with whom EMBL currently has postdoctoral funding schemes. For the 2023 call this includes: Innovation Campus Heidelberg Mannheim Health & Life Sciences Alliance (Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum, Max-Planck-Institute für Medizinische Forschung, Universitäts Klinikum Heidelberg, Universitätsmedizin Mannheim, Universität Heidelberg, Zentralinstitut für Seelische Gesundheit) and AstraZeneca, UK (EAZPOD).

d) 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. Referees are still able to complete the online reference even after you have submitted your application provided that the call deadline has not passed. This provides referees with the maximum amount of time to complete their references. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that their referees complete the online reference by the call deadline.

2.3 Call Schedule

EIPOD-LinC has one annual call for applications. The 2023 call is open from November 20th 2023, until February 20th, 2024. Key dates for the call are summarized in the table below

Table 1: 2023 EIPOD-LinC Call Schedule

Date	Description
November 20 th , 2023 February 20 th , 2024	Call is open
February 21 st - February 28 th , 2024	Eligibility check of submitted applications and assignment of expert evaluators.
March 1 st - March 12 th , 2024	Evaluation of eligible applications by EMBL and external experts.
Week of March 25 th , 2024	Short-listing Meeting

Week of March 25 th , 2024	Programme office sends out invitations to interview. Candidates who are not shortlisted are informed.
Prior to April 18 th , 2024	Candidates interact with the labs involved in their research projects. The exact timing is based on discussion with the involved labs.
TBD	Welcome event for interviewing candidates
April 18 th , 2024	EIPOD-LinC Interviews (by Zoom)
April 22 nd , 2024	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 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 the MS partner if the project includes a MS partner

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

EIPOD-LinC 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 1 EMBL group leader and up to 2 external experts. Evaluators are asked to provide an overall impression of a **candidate's application** in terms of excellence, impact and implementation as described below and in Table 2.

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

Impact: Is assessed at the level of both the candidate and the proposed project.

Implementation: Is assessed at the level of the project.

Table 2: Weighted scoring system used for evaluation

	Excellence	Impact	Implementation
Researcher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research outputs (Publications, IP, data sets etc.) • Reference letters (2) • Research experience and technical skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher will gain new skills • The research project and participation in the programme will enhance the future career prospects of the researcher 	N/A
Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State of the art (quality/credibility) • Timely for the field of research (original & innovative) • The methodology is complete & appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project will have an impact on the scientific field • The project will benefit the involved labs/institutes (exchange & outputs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The expertise and technology needed for the project are available • The work plan is realistic (coherent/effective) • The roles of the involved groups clearly defined
Weighting			
	60%	20%	20%

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). The results of the 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

Prior to the interviews candidates interact with the labs involved in the proposed projects. During the interviews candidates give a talk about their research accomplishments and their proposed research project (10 minutes) and a have a closed panel interview (30 minutes per candidate). The interviews for the 2023 call will take place on Thursday, April 18th, 2024.

3.4 Results

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. Appeal requests 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

Successful fellows receive an initial contract for 3 years and may stay at EMBL for a total of 5 years, provided that the Project Host has additional funds. Fellows who have a MS partner may receive a 6-month extension of their fellowship provided that they spend 1-year of their 3-year fellowship in the MS lab. The conditions of employment, as detailed in the work contracts, are summarised below.

Living allowance: 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 subject to EMBL internal policies related to good scientific practice, including the use of human biological samples and research with animals. Projects requiring ethical approvals must have these in place prior to a fellow beginning their project.

6. Information webinar for interested applicants

An informational webinar for interested applicants will take place on November 10th at 11am CET (register here). Following the event a recording will be available to applicants on [the programme pages](#).

7. Programme Office Contact Information

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

Programme Office

Tel.: +49 6221 387 8329

Email: eipod@embl.org