EMBL Interdisciplinary Postdocs- Exploring Life in Context

Guide for Applicants
November 2025

Call deadline: February 2nd, 2026

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

EIPOD-LinC has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe's research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 101217201.

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Introduction

The **European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL)** is an intergovernmental research organisation and centre of excellence for life sciences in Europe. 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 (Hinxton). 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.

EMBL's current 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 explore these different scales through 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.

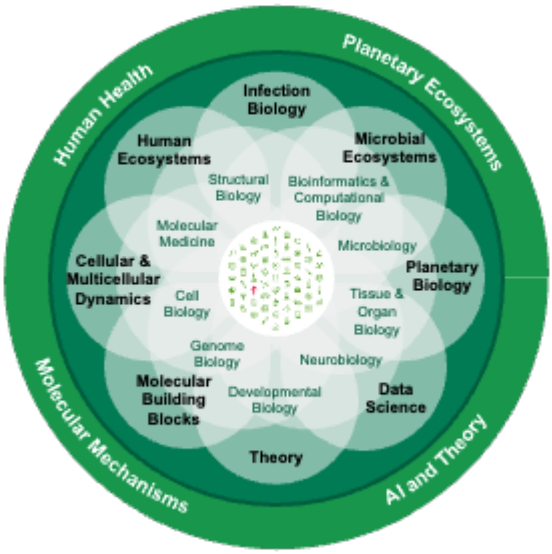
EIPOD-LinC is an international postdoctoral fellowship programme offered by EMBL and the EC's MSCA Cofund programme (grant agreement number 101217201). Embedded in EMBL's unique interdisciplinary and collaborative research environment, it builds on previous versions of the successful EIPOD programmes 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. All projects require an EMBL host and a partner 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 provides 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. They spend between 3 to 12 months in the lab of the MS partner.

1. Programme overview

1.1 Research training and supervision

Research projects and secondments

Fellows work on self-designed interdisciplinary research projects under the overarching theme of exploring life in context. Their projects are in one of four areas linked to the EMBL programme:



(1) **Molecular Mechanisms**: investigates the molecular mechanisms underlying the principals of biological processes across spatiotemporal scales and how changes (genetic, epigenetic and/or environmental) affect molecular function, modifications, and macromolecular complexes, including subcellular structures; develops innovative experimental methods and advanced technologies to measure and manipulate living systems.

(2) **Human Health**: applies molecular insights to understand human biology and develop disease models and therapeutic strategies, e.g., in combating antimicrobial resistance and infectious diseases; uses human cohort data and molecular genetics in cells, organoids, organs-on-a-chip, and animal models to explore the interplay between genetics and the environment.

(3) **Planetary Ecosystems**: investigates interactions between microbes, plants, animals with each other and their environment at the molecular level.

(4) **AI and Theory**: uses mathematical models, physics principles and AI to predict biological processes at all scales, from molecular to population levels, with a focus on structural biology, omics, and imaging.

The projects involve an EMBL Host and a partner lab from academia, industry or a clinic in an EMBL member state, prospect member state or associate member state. Additional partners (EMBL or EMBL MS) are possible if relevant to the project. Fellows spend between 3 to 12 months in the lab of the MS partner on research secondment.

Supervision set up

Each fellow has at least **two supervisors** (a main supervisor from EMBL and a co-supervisor from an EMBL MS) from different research fields and/or sectors, providing interdisciplinary

guidance and specialised training. Fellows also benefit from EMBL's established **mentor programme,** which provides support from an EMBL faculty member not involved in their research project. Their mentor provides research and professional guidance and support, and, if relevant, career support. Fellows pursuing non-academic careers can choose **external mentors** with support from EMBL's Career Service. EIPOD alumni are prominently featured as possible mentors when relevant.

1.2 Professional competencies and individualised training

Professional competencies

The interdisciplinary research training fellows receive in the lab is complemented by evidence-based holistic training package in line with the needs of future employers from the academic, private and public sectors. It is designed with a focus on how to do research in a diverse, responsible and open manner, how to communicate and engage relevant stakeholders and how to best exploit research results.

Trainings include:

- Gender and diversity dimension in research
- Research integrity and good scientific practice
- Open science and data management
- Dissemination and communication
- IP and entrepreneurship
- Leadership training
- Innovation training
- Science Policy training

The programme also offers fellows the opportunity to contribute to a one-week summer school for undergraduate and M.Sc. students from EU widening Countries. Fellows will be responsible for the design of the lectures and practicals, evaluation and selection of applicants and the core teaching.

Fellows have access to extensive portfolio of courses focusing on professional skills trainings from EMBL's Professional Training and Development and Complementary Scientific Skills programmes which offer a wide range of courses including IT, language, project management, personal efficiency courses, grant writing, and more.

Outreach and Communication Training

EIPOD-LinC fellows also complete public engagement training with EMBL's Science Education and Public Engagement Team where they learn to engage with the broader community through **outreach and communication activities**. They contribute to one outreach activity with SEPE such as taking part in activities like public lectures, guided tours, and media interviews, helping them hone their communication skills.

Career development and individualised training

Each fellow creates a **Career Development Plan (CDP)** outlining the research project and priorities for the coming year, areas in which fellows would like to further develop skills and a description of training (research and transferable skills) to focus on to support research progress and long-term career planning. This includes a section dedicated to planning for technical training relevant to the interdisciplinary research project. The CDP is discussed in a dedicated meeting with the supervisors to which the fellow's mentor is also invited. It is updated annually to monitor progress and ensure ongoing alignment with career goals.

Fellows meet with one of EMBL's Career Advisors early in the programme and then annually to clarify career aims and identify suitable courses to develop the skills needed to be competitive in their preferred career. After their first year, fellows also chose an external mentor in the career area they would like to transition into for additional input.

2. Eligibility criteria and application

2.1 Eligibility

Academic requirements

Applicants must hold a Ph.D. at the time of the call deadline (February 2, 2026 for the 2025 call). Researchers who have successfully defended their doctoral thesis but who have not yet been formally awarded the degree are eligible to apply. A maximum of eight years of experience in research, from the date of the award of their PhD degree, is permitted. Years of experience outside research and career breaks will not count towards the above maximum, nor will years of experience in research in third countries, for nationals or long-term residents of EU Member States or Horizon Europe Associated Countries who wish to reintegrate in Europe.

Successful candidates have 4 months to take up their fellowship.

Mobility requirements

The programme is open to experienced researchers of all nationalities. Prior association (including visitor contracts) of an applicant with EMBL and/or the MS partner lab is compatible with application to the programme but cannot exceed 12 months within the last 3 years prior to the application deadline. Prior association relates to having worked with a person/group. It can include having done a Ph.D. or Postdoc with the supervisor or having been a visitor in their lab/group. Any previous association must be indicated on the application form.

Secondment requirements

All applicants must include a partner lab from an EMBL MS who will participate in the research project as a co-supervisor. The partner can be from an academic institute, industry or clinic. Successful applicants will spend between 3 to 12 months in the MS lab on research secondment.

2.2 Application process

Important note: The application form and project proposal template including ethics prescreening form (both available on the programme pages) must be used for your application to be eligible.

Steps to apply:

1. Develop an interdisciplinary project proposal under the overarching theme of life in context (see section 1.1). This will be submitted as part of your application. The project template (available on the programme pages) must be used. Applicants are also asked to complete an ethics self-assessment (template from Horizon Europe is included with the project template) which will be screened by EMBL's Bioethics Office to ensure alignment with EMBL and EC regulations.
2. Decide on what combination of groups has the skills needed to support your project. All projects need an EMBL host and a partner from an academic institute, industry or clinic from an EMBL Member State, Associate Member State or Prospective Member State (MS). In order to participate, a MS partner must be actively engaged in research at the level of lab head or equivalent. They should also be eligible to supervise postdocs at their home institution. Additional partners (MS or EMBL) may also participate if relevant for the project
3. Contact an EMBL host to discuss your project idea. EMBL's research groups can be screened by research area. Make sure the group leader(s) you are interested are participating in the call (available here).
4. Choose a partner from an external academic institute, industry or clinic from an EMBL Member State, Associate Member State or Prospective Member State. Not sure who to choose? Many EMBL hosts have suggested collaborators (available here). You can also discuss with your EMBL host.
5. Complete the application form (available here).
6. Convert your application, project and ethics forms to a single PDF and upload them together with relevant certificates (e.g., PhD certificate, MSc, BSc, other relevant certificates) in the application portal available on the programme pages.
7. Please ask your referees to send their references to: EIPOD-references@embl.de Note: the references are due by the call closing on February 2, 2026. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the reference letters are submitted to the EIPOD Office on time.

2.3 Call schedule

EIPOC-LinC has one annual call for applications. The 2025 call is open from November 28, 2025 to February 2, 2026. The full call schedule is available below.

Table 1: 2025 EIPOD-LinC call Schedule

Description	Date
Call opening	Nov. 28, 2025
Call closing	Feb. 2, 2026
Eligibility and ethics checks	Feb. 3 – Feb. 15, 2026
Evaluation of applications	Feb. 16 – March 9, 2026
Short-listing meeting	March 24, 2026
EIPOD Office sends out invitations, application outcomes	Week of March 26, 2026
Candidates visit labs involved in their projects (organized by recruiting group leaders)	Prior to interviews
Interviews	April 20 and 21, 2026
Decision meeting	April 22, 2026
EIPOD Office sends out interview results	Within 1 week from interviews

3. Review process

3.1 Eligibility and ethics checks

Submitted applications are checked for eligibility by the EIPOD Team. The EMBL Bioethics Office does an ethics check on the projects based on the submitted Horizon Europe ethics self-assessment that applicants complete.

3.2 Evaluation of applications

EIPOD-LinC is a competitive fellowship programme. It follows a weighted scoring system based on specific criteria to ensure a transparent and merit-based selection process. Eligible applications that pass the ethics checks are independently reviewed by up to 3 external experts. The criteria for the

evaluation of applications are described in Table 2. References are considered in the evaluation of the candidate's profile.

Table 2: Evaluation Criteria for submitted applications

Research Project – max score of 5		**50%**
Excellence	• Quality of the proposed research objectives (state-of the art/credibility) • Research project is interdisciplinary • Project is timely for the field of research (original/innovative) • The methodology is complete and appropriate. Gender dimensions and other diversity aspects are considered if relevant. Quality and appropriateness of open science practices	50%
Impact	• The project will have an impact on the scientific field • Suitability and quality measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts (dissemination, exploitation, communication) • Credibility of the project to enhance the fellow's employability and career development	30%
Implementation	• Overall coherence and feasibility of the work plan including risk assessment • Quality of the proposed research plan in terms of available resources and expertise • Quality and match of proposed projected and research group, facilities/infrastructure and staff hosting the researcher • The roles of the involved groups are clearly defined	20%
Candidate profile – max score of 5		**50%**
• Quality and appropriateness of the researcher's core, technical and specialist competencies • Quality of the candidate's research output considering career stage and background (i.e., publications, preprints, software, data, protocols, patents, exhibitions, policy papers etc. • Researcher will gain new interdisciplinary research skills • Clear and credible motivation of the researcher for joining the programme and the involved groups (EMBL and MS partner)		

For the research project each individual section (excellence, impact, implementation) is scored out of 5. These are weighted as described in Table 2 to arrive at a mark out of 5. The candidate profile is also scored out of 5. The project and candidate profile scores are weighted 50% each resulting in a reviewer score out of max. 5. The final evaluation score is the average of the 3 reviewer scores. It must be equivalent to 70% or higher (3.5/5) to be considered for the panel interviews. Approximately

two candidates per available fellowship will be interviewed, provided that there are enough candidates of sufficient quality.

Table 3: Meaning of scores

Score	Meaning
1 (poor)	The criterion is inadequately addressed or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
2 (fair)	Broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses
3 (satisfactory)	Addresses the criterion very well, but several shortcomings are present
4 (good)	Addresses the criterion very well, but there are a small number of shortcomings
5 (excellent)	Successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion

3.3 Evaluation of applicants during the panel interviews

The interview panels are each composed of 2 EMBL group leaders and 2 external evaluators. For the panel interviews the same scoring system of 1-5 is used, together with a standardised panel form allowing for comparability of candidates across panels. The criteria used by panel members are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Weighted scoring system and criteria used for panel interviews

Panel interview – max score of 5; threshold for consideration of a fellowship offer is 70%		
Presentation and panel discussion	• Quality of the presentation • Quality of the scientific discussion related to presentation • General scientific knowledge • Knowledge of current and future fields of work • Candidate embraces interdisciplinary aspects of the project	70%
Motivation and career perspectives	• Candidate will gain new interdisciplinary competencies by completing the research project • Clear and credible motivation of the researcher for joining the programme and the involved groups (EMBL and MS partner) • Participation in the programme will support the career goals of the candidate	30%

Each panel member independently completes a panel form. The scores are averaged to arrive at a final panel score which needs to be equivalent to 70% or higher to be considered for a fellowship offer.

3.4 Interviews

Prior to the panel interviews, candidates visit the host and MS partner labs. These visits should preferentially take place in person but may also be done by VC.

The interviews will take place by Zoom on April 20 and 21, 2026. Candidates give a presentation (10 min.) on their scientific contributions to date and their self-designed research project to an interview panel. This is followed by a discussion covering scientific aspects of the previous and proposed work, motivation of the candidate and career-related topics (30 min.)

3.5 Results

The Short-listing and Offers Committee decide on the list of offers and a ranked waiting list based on a ranked candidate list generated from the combined average evaluation and interview scores. It is composed of 5 members of the Steering Committee (the Project Coordinator and 4 EMBL group leaders) and 4 external experts. Interviewing candidates are informed of the outcome of their interview by email within 1 week of the official interviews which includes individualised feedback.

3.6 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 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

EIPOD-LinC fellows receive employment contracts as EMBL Postdoctoral Fellows. The period of the EIPOD-LinC Fellowship contract is three years. Fellows may stay up to 5 years in total at EMBL provided that the supervisor has funding. All fellows will be subject to relevant employment regulations and receive social benefits. 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 insurance 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 insurance 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

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.

6. Information webinar for interested applicants

A recording of a webinar including a short presentation on the programme and how to apply is available to applicants on the programme pages.

7. Programme Office contact information

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

EIPOD Office

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Email: eipod@embl.de