

Committee guidelines

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Installation Grant application deadlines 2023:

Applications for an Installation Grant: 15 April, 12:00 CEST

Referee submission of reference letters: 15 April, 12:00 CEST

Interview in a hybrid format: the committee is on-site in Heidelberg, Germany and interviewees are presenting online. Date: 5. – 6. October 2023

SDIG 2023 participating countries: Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Montenegro, Lithuania, Portugal, Poland, Türkiye

EMBO subject areas: Cell Cycle, Cell & Tissue Architecture, Cellular Metabolism, Chromatin & Transcription, Development, Differentiation & Death, Evolution & Ecology, Genome Stability & Dynamics, Genomic & Computational Biology, Immunology, Membranes & Transport, Microbiology, Virology & Pathogens, Molecular Medicine, Neuroscience, Plant Biology, Proteins & Biochemistry, RNA, Signal Transduction, Structural Biology & Biophysics, Systems Biology

Contact: yip@embo.org

EMBO IG Committee 2023:

Karim Labib, UK, chair
Melanie Blokesch, CH
Andrew Carter, UK
Karin de Visser, NL
Carsten Janke, FR
Luke O'Neill, IE
Giampietro Schiavo, UK
Katja Sträßer, DE
Miguel Torres, ES
Dolf Weijers, NL

1. EMBO Installation Grants (IG)

The EMBO Installation Grants were launched in 2006 as a special project of EMBC by a subset of its member states. These grants help scientists to relocate to participating member states, set up their labs and establish a reputation in the European scientific community. The scheme is entirely funded by the participating EMBC Member States and successful applicants receive an annual award of 50,000 euros for three to five years. Selection and management of these grants are carried out under the umbrella of the EMBO Young Investigator Network.

In 2023 applications will be accepted from applicants setting up labs in Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Lithuania, Montenegro, Poland, Portugal and Türkiye. Installation Grantees are eligible for all the benefits of the Young Investigator Programme, but they are not eligible for the EMBO YIP lecture.

2. The EMBO Installation Grants Committee

2.1. Terms of reference

EMBO committees act in an advisory role to EMBO Council. The authority to recommend candidates for funding to the SDIG Board has been delegated by EMBO Council to the EMBO Installation Grants Committee.

The EMBO Installation Grants Committee is comprised of EMBO Members with different areas of scientific expertise. Committee members normally serve a four-year term. The Installation Grants Committee suggests replacements for outgoing committee members. The suggested names are submitted to EMBO Council for appointment. New committee members are invited by the EMBO YIP Office.

The committee selects a chair (normally a current member of the committee with some experience on the committee) and the proposed name is brought to EMBO Council for appointment. The chair serves a term of three years in addition to the number of years they have already served on the committee. When a chair finishes their term, the committee members will be asked by written procedure to propose a new chairperson. Only proposals received by written procedure prior to the committee meeting can be voted upon.

The Installation Grants Committee meets once per year to interview and rank the top candidates and make the final recommendation to the SDIG Board. All proposals are confidential until approved by the SDIG Board and announced publicly.

The Installation Grants Committee also reviews the third-year reports required to continue the grant to five years and makes recommendations to the SDIG Board.

All travel and accommodation expenses incurred by committee members attending committee meetings are covered by EMBO.

2.2. Tasks of the EMBO Installation Grants Committee

The EMBO Installation Grants Committee carries out the selection of the Installation Grantees. The committee also receives an annual report summarising the programme's activities.

The committee submits a ranking of Installation Grant applicants to the EMBC Strategic Installation Grant Board (SDIG Board). The SDIG Board decides on the number of scientists to be awarded based on the available budget. The committee also makes recommendations to continue or terminate existing Installation Grants.

EMBO receives annually about 60 applications for the EMBO Installation Grants.

Each committee member is asked to review 14 to 15 Installation Grants applications. Approximately 20 selected candidates will be invited to an interview. Each committee member will act as the primary reviewer for 2-3 interviewees.

Final decisions on the applicant ranking are made during the discussions at the end of the interview day.

2.3. EMBO Conflict of Interest Policy

Committee members are asked to indicate prior to their involvement in the evaluation any real or perceived conflict of interest that may arise in evaluating any of the candidates. Please take note of EMBO's Conflict of Interest Policy in [Annex I](#). The following situations may arise for Installation Grants Committee members:

Situation	Level of conflict	Consequence
Being an advisor of the applicant for this application	High	Excluded from review process*
Being an active collaborator with the applicant or having collaborated during the previous five years	High	Excluded from review process*
Being a partner of the applicant	High	Excluded from review process*
Having a PhD or postdoctoral/training relationship with the applicant now or during the previous five years	High	Excluded from review process*
Working in same institution/university	High	Excluded from review process*
Having a financial interest in the application	High	Excluded from review process*

**Cannot be assigned as a reviewer/primary interviewer of the proposal; cannot participate in the discussions related to that particular application, i.e. needs to leave the room while the discussion takes place and cannot be present during the interview. For any questions about a potential conflict of interest, please contact the EMBO YIP Office (yip@embo.org).*

2.4. Confidentiality

Strict confidentiality is expected regarding all applications. Information received during the review process and the committee meeting should not be relayed to third parties. Please see [Annex II](#). Code of Conduct for EMBO Committees, for further details.

2.5. Data protection

Committee members must destroy any data provided to them for the purpose of the selection (application and nomination files, including references, etc.) within six months after the conclusion of the respective selection procedure. Please see [Annex II](#), Code of Conduct for EMBO Committees, for further details.

3. The EMBO Installation Grants selection procedure

3.1. Overview

The EMBO YIP Office screens all applications to ensure eligibility requirements are met. Eligible applications are then pre-screened by the EMBO Installation Grants Committee. Approximately 20 of the applicants are selected to attend an online interview with the committee in Heidelberg on 6 October 2023.

KEY DATES 2023 (Bold text indicates a deadline for committee members)

15 April	Deadline for IG applications
End of April	IG application files sent to committee for pre-screening
21 May	Deadline for votes from IG pre-screen committee
Early September	Receipt of complete files by committee members
5 October (late afternoon)	Committee meeting
6 October	IG interviews

3.1.1. Eligibility criteria checked by the EMBO Office

- Applicants must be negotiating a full-time position at an institute or university in Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Montenegro, Lithuania, Portugal, Poland, Türkiye by the date of application, or have established a laboratory in one of these countries in the last two years (no earlier than 15.04.2021).
- In the four years prior to application, applicants should have spent at least two consecutive years (since 2019 for the call 2023) outside the country in which they are planning to establish their laboratory.

3.1.2. Application forms

Application for an Installation Grant consists of two separate applications: one submitted by the researcher, and another submitted by the receiving institute. The application files will be electronically available in PDF format.

The researcher's application includes:

- **Summary form** with:
 - a short summary of the research plan
 - a short version of the CV
 - details of three scientists providing letters of reference
 - details of funding available to the laboratory.
- **Application form** with:
 - a short description of previous research carried out by the candidate
 - a CV and a list of publications
 - details of the applicant's two best papers.
- A short description of the host institute's facilities relevant to the candidate's research.
- A breakdown of how the potential budget will be used.
- A three-page description of the research project.
- Three letters of reference.

The **institute's application form** includes a description of:

- the offer that is being made to the applicant (i.e., staff, laboratory space, etc.)
- the institute's infrastructure
- available equipment
- relevant colleagues (to show that other scientists at the institute work in areas relevant to the applicant's research)
- the duties of the applicant
- the institute's application also includes a confirmation of the offer to the applicant signed by the Head of Department.

3.2. First step of the evaluation procedure: Pre-screening

Candidates for the EMBO Installation Grants are first pre-screened to eliminate weaker candidates to allow more time to identify the top scientists in an interview procedure. The aim of the pre-screen procedure is to select about 20 candidates who should be interviewed.

Committee members are sent the list of applicants and are asked to declare any perceived or real conflicts of interest regarding any of the candidates (see [Annex I](#), EMBO Conflict of Interest Policy, for further details).

Each member of the pre-screen committee receives about 15 applications. Each application is scored by three committee members.

3.2.1. Evaluation criteria for the pre-screening

TRACK RECORD

Criteria for evaluating the track record:

- Outstanding quality: Are the publications to date an indication that this is an outstanding scientist?
- Scientific breadth: Has the applicant shown a willingness to change research area or the ability to tackle new and important problems?

RESEARCH

Criteria for evaluating the research:

- Ambition: Is the proposed research ambitious and likely to lead to novel contributions in the field?

3.2.2. Scoring system

Applications should be graded as follows:

- A: strong candidate for interview
- B: a potential candidate for an interview
- C: not strong enough for an interview
- D: weak candidate

Applicants are informed of the results of the pre-screen by mid-June.

3.3. Second step of the evaluation procedure: External assessment and interviews by the IG Committee

The second step consists of an assessment by external reviewers and interviews with the committee.

3.3.1. External assessment

The full applications of the pre-selected candidates are sent to an EMBO Member expert in the applicant's area of research to provide a written confidential assessment, focusing on the candidates' **standing in the field and the feasibility of the proposed work**. External assessors are asked to declare any conflict of interest. Candidates can exclude specific EMBO Members from the process.

3.3.2. Interviews

The interviews for the EMBO Installation Grants take place in a hybrid format, with the EMBO Installation Grants committee present at the EMBO Offices in Heidelberg on XXX 2023 and candidates connecting remotely.

Each committee member is assigned to one of the two sub-committees. Each sub-committee interviews around 10 candidates. Ahead of the meeting, the EMBO YIP Office sends all committee members a list of candidates to interview. Conflicts of interest regarding particular candidates should be declared prior to the final assignments ([see Annex I](#), EMBO Conflict of Interest Policy, for further details). Committee members receive the full applications with the reviewer's reports. Each committee member is assigned as a primary interviewer to two to three applicants.

During the interviews, the primary interviewers lead the discussion with and on the candidate, i.e., starting and moderating the questions, making sure that questions regarding the independence of the candidate, and possibly other issues, are satisfactorily explored. Each candidate is initially evaluated during a 30-minute timeslot: 10 minutes to present their work followed by 10 minutes for questions. The remaining 10 minutes are reserved for the committee to discuss the application and make a preliminary ranking comparing the interviewed candidates.

3.3.3. Evaluation criteria

Committee members should bear in mind that the application of the host institute also is important: The host institute must offer good support and provide an environment where the candidate can thrive. There have been cases where candidates have not been awarded because the offer from the host institute was perceived as not adequate.

EMBO is a signatory of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) and as such does not use publication metrics such as the Journal Impact Factor during the assessment

process (see <https://sfdora.org> for further details). Applicants are asked NOT to include publication-based metrics in their publication list.

The following aspects of each application should be evaluated:

TRACK RECORD

Criteria for evaluating the track record:

- Outstanding quality: Are the publications to date an indication that this is an outstanding scientist?
- Scientific breadth: Has the applicant shown a willingness to change research area or the ability to tackle new and important problems?

RESEARCH

Criteria for evaluating the research:

- Ambition: Is the proposed research ambitious and likely to lead to novel contributions in the field?

GROUP AND RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

Criteria for evaluating the group and host research environment:

- Size and funding sources: Are the number of laboratory members and the available funds sufficient to undertake the described research?
- Host institute: Is the research environment conducive to competitive research?

INDEPENDENCE

Criteria for evaluating the candidate's independence:

- Operational independence: the candidate should supervise their own PhD students and have financial independence.
- Intellectual independence: What is the influence of former supervisors and institute/department heads on the candidate's current research?

OFFER BY THE HOST INSTITUTE

Criteria for evaluating the host institute's offer:

- Does the host institute provide a good environment for the applicant, e.g.:
 - sufficient lab space,
 - basic lab equipment,
 - access to central facilities,
 - availability of funding for students/technicians/postdoctoral researchers,
 - colleagues relevant to the applicant's area of research, etc.
- What are the teaching requirements and other responsibilities of the applicant? Is the time that can be dedicated to research sufficient to carry out the proposed project?

3.3.4. Final decision

The two sub-committees finalize the ranking of the candidates after completing the interviews. The final ranking is forwarded by the office to the Strategic Development Installation Grants (SDIG) Board. The Board consists of delegates from EMBC Member States who participate in the Installation Grant scheme. They meet at the end of November, prior to the EMBC meeting, to decide how many candidates will receive a grant based on the budget available in each participating member state. The Board informs EMBO how many of the candidates will receive a grant to move to their respective countries. The Board cannot change the ranking provided by the committee but can decide to award any number of candidates recommended for funding.

4. Evaluation of Installation Grant extensions

Installation Grants are awarded for a period of five years, subject to a positive review in the third year. In the spring of the third year, grantees are asked to submit **a short scientific report** and to ask their **institute to comment on their progress**.

Each report is sent to two current or former members of the committee based on their area of expertise. The committee members are asked to judge the grantee's progress. These reviews are then sent to the whole committee along with the report from the grantee and their institute. During the committee meeting, the committee discusses the grantees' progress and makes a recommendation regarding the continuation for two years.

The committee's recommendation of either "recommended for further funding" or "not recommended for further funding" is conveyed to the Strategic Development Installation Grants Board and is binding. Candidates who have been positively evaluated will be funded for a further two years.

5. Annex I: EMBO Conflict of Interest Policy

EMBO is supported by several expert committees in the evaluation of applications or nominations submitted to any of its programmes and activities. The task of the evaluator is to ensure the confidential, fair and equitable peer review of the submissions. In this capacity, the evaluator shall work independently and not represent any organization. The evaluator commits themselves to strict confidentiality and impartiality for this task and shall not discuss the proposal with anyone not directly involved with the peer review of the candidate/proposal.

Persons who are involved in the evaluation of applications or nominations submitted to any of the EMBO programmes and activities shall declare to the EMBO Office any conflict of interest in relation to any candidate or proposal prior to their involvement in an evaluation. Persons with a conflict of interest will be exempt from the review, evaluation and decision-making process for the evaluation in question.

Conflicts of interest include:

- Having a personal relationship with the candidate or proposer, or, in the case of a fellowship applicant, with the future supervisor/host.
- Having supervised the candidate for a PhD degree or as a postdoctoral researcher.
- Having a significant academic relationship with the candidate, or in the case of a fellowship applicant, with the future supervisor/host; this includes having jointly published a research paper in the last five years.
- Being a member of the candidate's department or institution.
- Having a current or planned close scientific cooperation.
- Having commercial/financial interests in relation to the candidate/proposal.
- Having been involved in the preparation of the proposal.
- Benefitting directly or indirectly from the acceptance or rejection of the proposal/candidate (i.e. direct competition).
- Being in any other situation that could cast doubt on the evaluator's ability to evaluate the proposal impartially, or that could reasonably appear to do so in the eyes of an external third party.

6. Annex II: Code of Conduct for EMBO Committees

EMBO is committed to ethical and responsible decision-making, responsible conduct of research and the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA). These principles inform the work of our committees. The guidelines below have been prepared to foster good practice and provide guidance to committee members in exercising their duties.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- **Accountability.** As a committee member, you are required to participate in committee activities in a lawful, ethical and justifiable manner
- **Confidentiality.** All committee-related information and documentation is strictly confidential unless otherwise declared. Confidentiality extends beyond the meeting. As a committee member, please do not speak on behalf of EMBO or the committee about the details or the outcome of selection processes, or comment personally on any decisions made. In particular, please do not divulge any such information to applicants, proposers, or other interested parties.
- **Impartiality and Conflicts of Interest (COI).** As a committee member, you must act in an impartial manner and declare any real, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest as soon as you become aware of them. Please refer to the EMBO COI policy, which is provided to you with the committee guidelines. The committee guidelines also give examples of COI that may occur specifically with respect to the work of your committee.
- **Data protection.** As a committee member, you will be privy to personal information about candidates and nominees. Please be aware of the sensitive character of the data you receive and ensure that you protect them appropriately. You must destroy any personal data provided to you for the purpose of a selection (application and nomination files, including references etc.) within six months after the conclusion of the respective selection procedure.
- **Decision making.** The EMBO Council has delegated decision-making authority to some committees to make decisions on applications or proposals. Any strategic decisions and substantial rule changes remain the prerogative only of the EMBO Council.

PREPARATION

- **Familiarise yourself with your committee's terms of reference.** Committee terms of reference are described in the committee guidelines. If you have any questions about these, please contact the committee chair or the responsible officer at EMBO.
- **Read the documentation and prepare for decisions** (agenda, minutes from the previous meeting, applications etc.) prior to the meeting. Please reserve sufficient time e.g. to score candidates or nominees. If it is your first time on the committee this may

take longer than you think. Please ask current or former committee members for advice if in doubt.

- **Submit documentation to the EMBO Office in time.** Any preparatory documentation (e.g. candidate scores) must reach EMBO in time for the office to assemble the necessary tables for discussion and decision at the committee meeting.

DURING THE MEETING

- **Attendance.** Committee members should ensure their presence at meetings and attend for the entire duration of the meeting. If it is absolutely necessary to leave early or arrive late please advise the committee chair and the EMBO office, so that agenda items that need your particular input can be moved if possible.
- **No social media posts from the committee meeting.** Please do not divulge information from the meeting, even if it appears innocuous or non-confidential. It is fine to write that you will be attending or did attend, but not about what is being discussed; this is strictly confidential committee business. The EMBO administration may make recordings for the purpose of documentation (e.g. minutes), with the explicit consent of all attendees.
- **Concentrate on the task at hand.** Please do not engage in unrelated work or electronic communication during the meeting and turn off your mobile phone.
- Breaks during which you can make phone calls and check emails will be scheduled.
- Be brief and to the point.
- **Express your opinion.** You have been recruited to the committee for your expertise and competence. Your opinion is valued, and, in accordance with good scientific practice, should be reasoned.
- **Vote based on your expertise and conclusions.** You are recruited as an individual, not as a representative of a certain group. You may of course bring to the committee the interests or views that you perceive as being held by your community (based on gender, research field, nationality, etc.), but your decisions should be based on the conclusions you have drawn from the information you have been presented with. Please do not take advantage of your membership in the committee for the benefit of a particular group.
- **Consider other committee members' views but challenge the consensus if necessary.** If you feel that the consensus is based on incomplete or biased views or information, please voice your reservations. Keep in mind that the consensus reached should be in the best interest of the life science community.
- **Respect the selection guidelines and criteria.** Make decisions based on the criteria you are supposed to evaluate and adhere to the principles outlined in the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), chief among them making assessments based on scientific content rather than publication metrics such as the Journal Impact Factor (JIF). To learn more, visit the [DORA website](#).
- **Recognize (unconscious) biases.** We all have them and need to make a conscious effort to overcome them. As a committee member, please be aware that unconscious biases may affect decision-making (including your own) and please work to avoid them.

AFTER THE MEETING

- **Feel free to suggest improvements** to the way the committee meeting is being run or conducted. Address either the chair or the officer or both if appropriate with your suggestions and comments. Your suggestions may become an agenda item if raised in time prior to the meeting.