



# EMBO Young Investigator Programme

## **Application guidelines**

(last update: January 2021)

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Application deadlines 2021:

Stage 1:

Pre-application to the EMBO Young Investigator Programme: 1 April 2021, 12:00 CEST

Referee submission of reference letters: 1 April, 12:00 CEST

Stage 2:

Full application to the EMBO Young Investigator Programme: 20 July 2021, 12:00 CEST

Stage 3:

Interview in Heidelberg, Germany (or optionally online): 9-10 November 2021

EMBC Member states:

Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, and United Kingdom.

EMBC Associate Member states: India, Singapore

Countries / territories covered by a co-operation agreement:

Taiwanese Ministry of Science and Technology, National Agency for Research and Development of Chile (ANID).

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](mailto:yip@embo.org)

EMBO YIP Committee 2021 (3 new members TBC):

Buzz Baum (UK)

Christoph Dehio (CH) (chair)

Pascal Genschik (FR)

Ana-Maria Lennon (FR)

Antonella de Matteis (IT)

Jan-Michael Peters (AT)

Irmgard Sinning (DE)

# EMBO Young Investigator Programme application guidelines

Application to the EMBO Young Investigator Programme (YIP) is via a two-stage online application process (pre-application and full application upon invitation) as described below.

Please check the eligibility criteria before applying.

Should you have questions regarding your application, please contact [yip@embo.org](mailto:yip@embo.org).

## Eligibility

Applications are accepted from candidates who meet the following criteria:

- Applicants should have been an independent group leader for at least one year and less than four years at the pre-application deadline (no earlier than 01.04.2017 and no later than 01.04.2020).
- Applicants should have an excellent track record.
- Candidates must do research in the life sciences (see EMBO subject areas) in an EMBC Member State or an EMBC Associate Member State (currently India and Singapore) or countries / territories covered by a cooperation agreement (currently Chile and Taiwan).
- Medical scientists working in the fields related to general EMBO subject areas are eligible to apply.
- Applicants are expected to have obtained sufficient funding to run their laboratory (consumables, lab space, salary for themselves and their staff).
- Applicants must have published at least one **last author research paper** in an international peer reviewed journal from independent work carried out in their own laboratory. EMBO will consider papers published on preprint servers (arXiv, BioRxiv, PeerJ., etc.) but a last author publication in an international peer reviewed journal is still a requirement. Your last author paper should have “accepted” status by the time of the interview (9 or 10 November, 2021). If your PhD or postdoc supervisor is included as an author on the paper, please explain their contribution to the work.
- Applicants must be able to attend an interview in Heidelberg, Germany, or optionally online, on 9 or 10 November 2021.

Please note:

- We accept last author research papers that have “in submission” status by the deadline (1 April 2021). Last author reviews are not accepted.
- For female candidates with children, the limit of four-years since independence is automatically extended by one year per child.
- For male applicants with children, the limit can be extended by the actual time taken off as paternity leave or – if their partner is working at least 80% FTE (full-time equivalent) – 3 months per child, whichever is longer.
- Illness and other care responsibilities are considered as exceptional circumstances on a case-by-case basis. Special provision may also be made for clinical scientists. If you feel your circumstances warrant an extension of the eligibility period, please contact the EMBO Young Investigator Programme office ([yip@embo.org](mailto:yip@embo.org)) for advice before applying.
- Independence is defined by:
  - Being able to apply for grants in one's own name and reporting directly to funding agencies;
  - Being able to submit manuscripts as last author ('corresponding author' is in this case not considered equivalent to 'last author').
  - Being responsible for supervising graduate students and/or post docs in one's own lab

Please contact the EMBO YIP office for eligibility advice before applying if:

- you require an extension of the eligibility period due to illness, extended military service or other exceptional circumstances;
- your transition to an independent group leader did not involve a formal change in position;
- you are unsure whether you meet the criteria for an independent group leader

## Application process

Application to the EMBO Young Investigator Programme is via a two-stage application process. Applications must be made via the EMBO online system. The application includes an online form for the scientist as well as an offline application form (a protected Word form to download), both of which must be completed. Please refer to the application guidelines below before starting your application.

### Timeline 2021

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Deadline for pre-applications      | 1 April, 12:00 CEST  |
| Pre-application results announced  | Mid-late June  |
| Full applications invited          | Mid-late June  |
| Deadline for full applications     | 20 July, 12:00 CEST  |
| Panel interviews                   | 9 & 10 November  |
| Results announced to applicants by | by 20 November   |
| Results announced publicly         | by 30 November (exact date will be included in acceptance email) |

### Application procedure

#### Stage 1, pre-application:

- Applicants are asked to submit basic information about their scientific career and track record via the online application system.
- Within a week of the pre-application deadline on 1 April, applicants will receive a confirmation that their pre-application has been received and is complete.
- Pre-applications of eligible applicants are sent to the EMBO Young Investigator Committee for pre-screening. Please note that no further changes (adding extra information on papers and grants) can be made to your application after the files have been sent to the Committee.
- Following pre-screening, approximately 50 applicants will be invited to submit a full application and attend an interview with the selection committee. All candidates are informed of the outcome of their pre-application by email.

#### Stage 2, full application:

Applicants who pass the pre-screen step are invited to submit a full application by 20 July, 12:00 CEST.

Full applications are sent to an EMBO Member who is an expert in the area of the applicant's research for a confidential review. Candidates will have an opportunity to provide a list of EMBO Members with whom there may be a potential conflict of interest. These EMBO Members will be excluded from the reviewing process.

All candidates are interviewed by the EMBO Young Investigator Committee on 9 or 10 November, 2021 either in person in Heidelberg, Germany, or online if requested by the candidate.

A final decision is made at the EMBO Young Investigator Committee meeting, and all candidates will be informed

of the outcome of their application by email by 20 November.

## PRE-APPLICATION

The deadline for completing the pre-application is 1 April 12:00 CEST annually. The pre-application consists of:

- an online form;
- an offline form to be filled out and uploaded via the EMBO online application system;
- 3 reference letters (uploaded by the referees directly).

In the online form, you will be asked to provide:

- basic CV data;
- a short summary of your ongoing research (2000 characters, including spaces);
- details of three referees;
- your ORCID ID (if you do not have one, please register at <https://orcid.org/register>);
- a PDF version of the completed offline form. **Please follow the guidelines below.**

Please do not forget to click “form complete” to submit your application.

### REFERENCE LETTERS

References from three scientists (preferably former supervisors) are part of your pre-application form and must also be completed by the application submission deadline (1 April 12:00 CEST). The referees can be listed and activated before the rest of the application is completed. Once referees are “activated”, the system will automatically contact these scientists, asking them to provide their letter of reference via the online system. Your application form will remain open for editing.

Please inform your referee that there will be no option for document upload in the online system or sending via email. All reference letters should be completed via the online system, no PDF/Word files sent by email to the YIP office will be accepted. Referees shall follow steps explained in the form and paste their letter text in the provided field.

We strongly recommend that you complete/activate your referee details at least 4 weeks before the deadline to allow referees enough time to submit their letters.

Re-using letters from the past applications:

If you are a re-applicant and wish to re-use your previous letter of reference, please fill out the name and postal address of the referee in the form, but enter [yip@embo.org](mailto:yip@embo.org) into the email field. This way the YIP office will receive the reference letter request and the letter from your most recent application will be added to your application.

Reference submission status:

It is your responsibility to check that the referees have received the request and completed the form. Please follow-up with your referees to ensure that reference letters are submitted on time.

Reference status is listed under the link to the application form on the EMBO application system. If a referee does not receive the reference request, please contact the EMBO YIP office ([yip@embo.org](mailto:yip@embo.org)), so that the request can be re-sent.

Applications that do not have all 3 letters of reference are counted as incomplete.

Further instructions for completing the online pre-application form can be found in the EMBO application system.

### PRE-APPLICATION OFFLINE FORM

Please download the offline form (protected Word form) from our website and fill it out following the guidelines below.

- The form should be completed in Helvetica or Arial font, size 10;
- Margins should not be altered;
- The form should be saved in PDF format for upload via the online system.

Please be reminded that color highlighting, table view or any other formatting is not acceptable. Also, please do not include impact factors of your publications.

#### **Curriculum vitae**

- Provide your professional experience and education in reverse chronological order i.e. with the most recent information first.
- Please include the month and year for the start/end dates. These should correspond to the dates entered in scientific CV & current position section in the online form.
- In general, the committee values mobility, but recognizes that there may be specific reasons why a candidate may have remained at / returned to a former supervisor's institute. If applicable, please explain in brief.
- The 'Other relevant information' section should include only relevant CV information and cannot exceed five lines. If you have discussed and received an approval for any special eligibility extension with the EMBO YIP office, please briefly summarize them in this section.

#### **Publication list**

- Publications should be listed in a compact format, such as that used in The EMBO Journal.
- Please emphasize your own name in bold, and (where appropriate) italicize members of your own independent laboratory.
  - *Example: Thiru A, Nietlispach D, Mott HR, Okuwaki M, Lyon D, Nielsen PR, Hirshberg M, Verreault A, Murzina NV, **Laue ED**. Structural basis of HP1/PXVXL motif peptide interactions and HP1 localisation to heterochromatin. EMBO J. (2004) 23: 489-499*
- Please sort your publications into the categories shown by the headings, listing:
  - published or in-press primary research articles from different career stages in the relevant 'Publications arising from...' sections.
  - manuscripts submitted to peer-reviewed journals in the 'In submission' section; reviews, comments, book chapters etc. in 'Other publications'.
- EMBO will consider papers published on preprint servers (arXiv, BioRxiv, PeerJ., etc.), but a last author publication in an international peer reviewed journal with "accepted" status by the day of your interview is still a requirement.
  - reviews, comments, book chapters etc. in 'Other publications'.
- If a publication from your independent group is co-authored by your former supervisor, please briefly explain their contribution.
- EMBO is a signatory of DORA and does not use journal-based metrics such as impact factor during the assessment process. Please do NOT include these in your publication list.

The first two pages of the YIP full application offline form are almost identical to the YIP pre-application offline form; we therefore advise you to keep a copy of the pre-application form, so that you can copy and update the relevant information should you reach the final selection stage.

## **FULL APPLICATION**

Applicants who are selected for interview will be asked to submit a full application. The full application requires further information in the online application form including:

- a list of your grants,
- a list of your lab members,

- a short description of your institute.

An offline application form (YIP full application form) must also be completed and uploaded as a PDF. This form requires you to provide the following. For more detailed instructions, please see additional guidelines below.

- (again) your CV and complete publication list (to allow inclusion of any updates since 1 April);
- a summary of each of your three best papers;
- a description of your research vision (no longer than two pages).

For more detailed instructions, please see additional guidelines below.

### **FULL APPLICATION OFFLINE FORM**

Curriculum vitae and publication list:

- Please complete as described for the pre-application form above
- Additionally, please underline your three best publications

Your three best publications:

- Please provide details of your three best publications, including a summary and a short explanation of why you chose each paper (max. 1000 characters including spaces). It is generally advisable to first include first / last author papers, then any others you are proud of (first research papers and then reviews).

Research vision (two pages maximum, excluding list of references):

- Applicants should describe the research themes and future directions of their lab.
- Any figures are included in the page count. Figures can be added by using copy/paste or by dragging a jpg/png file into the text (the “insert” menu is not available in protected forms).
- References can be added on an additional page if necessary.

At this stage, you will also receive an email requesting to provide up to three EMBO Members you would like to exclude from reviewing your application due to a potential conflict of interest.

## **Selection**

The EMBO Young Investigator Committee is looking for the best and most promising young independent researchers in Europe. The primary selection criterion applied by all EMBO committees is scientific excellence. Other aspects that the EMBO Young Investigator Committee will pay special attention to when making their decisions are:

### **TRACK RECORD**

- Are the publications to date an indication that this is an outstanding scientist? (Please note that EMBO does not use journal-based metrics such as impact factor for evaluation.)
- Has the applicant shown a willingness to change research area, which is an indication of an ability to tackle new and important problems?

### **RESEARCH**

- Is the proposed research ambitious and likely to lead to novel contributions in the field?
- Does the applicant have the potential to become a future leader in their field?

### **GROUP AND RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT**

- Is the research environment conducive to competitive research?
- Is the number of laboratory members and the available funds sufficient to undertake the described



research?

### **INDEPENDENCE**

- Is the candidate intellectually and financially independent?
- What is the influence of former supervisors and institute heads on the candidate's current research?

## **Panel interview**

Your interview will consist of 10 min research talk, followed by 10 min Q&A with the panel. The interviews are conducted in two parallel sub-panels, each panel consisting of 5 members of the Young Investigator Committee (list of current committee members can be found on page 3 of this guide, please check for updates on the website).

The interviews will take place in Heidelberg on 9 – 10 November, however interviewees have the option to hold their interview *online* (via Zoom), if they prefer not to travel. The selection committee has no preference between online and in-person interviews, so there will be no advantage based on the format.

If the interviewee prefers an online interview, they will join a Zoom call with the committee and share their screen for the presentation. Those who have chosen to present in the online format will be required to submit a backup video of their presentation in advance to be shared in case of connection issues, in which case they will be asked to dial in via phone to complete the discussion portion of the interview.

### **YOUR PRESENTATION**

Your research talk should be 10 minutes long. It is up to you how you would like to structure it, but as some general guidelines, you may want to consider the following structure:

- Quick overview of your scientific career (1 slide)
- Introduction of ongoing project(s)
- Outlook of future plans
- Any grant or publication updates since submission of the full report\*

\*Please note that the YIP office will not collect publication/grant updates prior to the interview. Please ensure to mention any new relevant information about manuscripts and papers during your talk.

The EMBO YIP office will only inquire about a publication update, if at the stage of the full application your *only* last author paper from your independent laboratory still has not been accepted. As by our eligibility criteria, candidates must have an accepted last author paper in a peer-reviewed journal by the time of their interview. Failing to provide this before the interview start will lead to disqualification from the selection process.

### **FEEDBACK**

No feedback will be given following the pre-selection stage due to a high number of applications each committee member has to review. However, the committee will provide feedback following an unsuccessful interview, if requested. Please contact the YIP office only for any questions related to your application process and/or feedback requests, do not contact the committee members directly.

Personally contacting YIP committee members for application advice / feedback can be interpreted as attempting to influence selection results and will disqualify your application.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Eligibility and pre-application forms (1st stage)

### General eligibility:

- Q: Is it possible to apply to the Young Investigator Programme if you are a European national working in a non-EMBC member state?

A: No, only applicants (of any nationality) working at an institute/university in an EMBC Member State, and EMBC Associate Member State (currently India and Singapore) or a in countries/territories covered by a co-operation agreement (currently Taiwan and Chile) are eligible to apply.

- Q: Is it possible to apply for both the EMBO Young Investigator Programme and Global Investigator Network in the same year?

A: Yes, scientists working in institutes in Chile, Taiwan, Singapore or India (the current EMBC Associate Member States and countries/territories covered by a co-operation agreement) who fulfill the requirements of both programmes may apply to both in the same year. If the scientist makes it to the interview stage for both, they will only be required to attend the GIN interview if not selected as a Young Investigator. Please note that once you have been selected as a YI you cannot apply for the GIN in the future. However, as a successful GIN programme awardee, you can still apply to be a YI if you fulfill eligibility criteria.

### Age limit:

- Q: Is there an age limit to apply for the Young Investigator Programme?

A: As of 2019, there no longer is an age limit for YIP applicants.

### Last author and publications:

- Q: What does "last author" mean and does it have to be without PhD and/or postdoc supervisors?

A: Applicants must have published at least one last author research paper in an international peer reviewed journal from independent work carried out in their own laboratory. The last author listed on a research paper indicates seniority/responsibility and is usually the group leader or PI (if your PhD or postdoc supervisor is included as an author, please explain the level of their contribution).

- Q: I don't have a paper as a senior author yet, but 2 manuscripts in revision. Would it increase my chances if I apply next year?

A: At the pre-application stage we accept papers being in revision. However, if you are invited to the interview, you would have to have a paper accepted (an email from the editor is sufficient, can be forwarded to us by you) by the interview date and time (November 9th or 10th).

- Q: My application is ready, however I am still waiting to submit two or three manuscripts. What should I do?

A: Please submit the application before April 1st, listing the manuscripts in question as "in submission". If you expect your manuscripts to be submitted before 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2021 (when the files are sent to the committee for the pre-selection), please contact EMBO YIP office and to check if it is still possible to send an updated pre-application form by email.

However, if you *do not* expect your manuscript to be submitted within the next 2-3 weeks after the application submission deadline (1. April), there is nothing to be done at this stage.

If your application passes to the next stage, you will be able to provide new manuscript status in the full application form.

- Q: What do you mean by "publications arising from your independent laboratory".

A: This includes publication of projects that have been started in your independent lab or shortly before you moved to it from your postdoc.

- Q: I have a co-corresponding authorship as an independent PI, can this be counted as “last author” paper by your criteria?

A: Co-corresponding authorship does not fulfill the “last author” requirement by default. Please write to EMBO YIP office explaining your exact contribution to the paper compared to those from the last author (and if applicable other co-corresponding authors).

#### **Independence:**

- Q: How do you define independence?

A: We define “independent” as:

- Being able to apply for grants in one’s own name and reporting directly to funding agencies.
- Being able to submit manuscripts as last author (“corresponding author” is not necessarily considered equivalent to “last author”).
- Being responsible for supervising graduate students and/or post docs in one’s own lab.

- Q: Are postdocs eligible to apply for the Young Investigator Programme?

A: No, postdocs are not eligible to apply. You have to be a group leader for at least 1 year. Please see our eligibility criteria.

- Q: How much funding is considered necessary to be able to eligible to apply?

A: There is no minimum requirement for the amount of funding you receive, as long as you can fully support your independent group (consumables, lab space, salary for you and your staff).

#### **Cut-off date:**

- Q: Does it matter how long ago I completed my PhD?

A: No, we only take into account the number of years since starting your independent lab/group (less than four years and more than one).

- Q: What is the exact cut-off date for applicants to be considered eligible in 2021?

A: Candidates are considered eligible if they started their independent group after 01.04.2017 (and before 01.04.2020). For female scientists, this is extended by one year per child and for male scientists by 3 months per child or by the number of paternal weeks listed (whichever is more). Other special circumstances may also extend the eligibility, please email [yip@embo.org](mailto:yip@embo.org) if you are uncertain.

- Q: I just started my group couple a months ago can I apply already this year?

A: No, according to the eligibility criteria you need to have your independent group for at least 1 year (and no more than 4).

- Q: Do you have any general advice how long one should wait to apply since the start of the independent lab?

A: Unfortunately, there is no rule of thumb. We have had successful applicants within the first 1.5-2 years of starting the group, but usually our applicants are within 3-4 years since the start of their own lab. The success rate of being selected is ~12%, so having a good publication track record coming from the independent group is highly favorable. However, papers are not the only merit of success that gets reviewed by the committee.

#### **Re-application:**

- Q: Can I apply multiple times in case my first application is rejected, and would a potential rejection be a disadvantage for applications in following years?

A: Yes, you may re-apply and no, potential rejection does not have any impact on the following applications.

- Q: Is there any specific eligibility condition regarding mobility to apply for the Young Investigator Programme?

A: Mobility is not a part of the eligibility criteria for the Young Investigator Programme.

#### **Online pre-application form:**

- Q: For my postdoctoral research I was supervised by two PIs. How is it best to add those to the online form?

A: Please write it in one line separated with a comma and please briefly explain the situation in your Word document (pre-application form) under the field “Other”.

- Q: When will I receive a confirmation that my pre-application has been received and is in order?

A: Within a week after the April 1 deadline you will receive an email to confirm that your pre-application has been received and is complete. If there are questions, or any information missing, you will be requested to submit it a.s.a.p. We will contact you in mid-late June to let you know whether your application has passed the pre-screen and is moving to the second stage.

- Q: Can I add some information to the application AFTER I clicked “form complete”?

A: Please take care that all information provided is complete and accurate before submission. If you absolutely need to edit something, please email [yip@embo.org](mailto:yip@embo.org).

- Q: I have finished the online form, uploaded my PDF and my referees have submitted their letters. However, the system status of my application is still “Submission open”. Could you please confirm that my pre-application is complete?

A.: Please first check that you have clicked the “form complete” button in the online form, if you did but the status has not changed yet, please send us an email and we will check it on our side.

- Q: In the “Publication Record” section of the form, which papers should I include?

A: Please include all research articles including reviews for the “Total number of publications” and only primary research articles for the number of first and last author publications.

## Reference letters

- Q: By when should the reference letters be submitted?

A: The deadline for referees to submit the reference letters is 1 April, 2021 at 12:00 CEST.

- Q: Can I submit only 2 reference letters?

A: Applications with less than 3 reference letters are considered “incomplete” and will not pass to the next stage of the application process.

- Q: I am a re-applicant, how can I re-submit a reference letter from a former application?

A: When filling out the referees in the online form, please enter the name and postal address of the referee, but enter [yip@embo.org](mailto:yip@embo.org) into the email field; the YIP office will receive the reference submission request and will copy the reference letter from your most recent application. Please mind that it is a manual process, so the references will not appear as complete immediately.

- Q: Can I change my referee if the one I previously approached cannot make it.

A: Please confirm with potential referees prior to entering them in the form, however if you do need to change a referee, please email the YIP office ([yip@embo.org](mailto:yip@embo.org)) right away. We will re-activate the referee form for you and you will be able to enter new referee information and email.

- Q: Can I submit a reference letter on behalf of my referee?

A: No, the reference letter **must** come from the referee listed in your form. If that referee has previously submitted a reference letter for a past YIP application, please enter “[yip@embo.org](mailto:yip@embo.org)” into their email field and we will copy their most recent reference letter to your current application.

- Q: My referee said they did not receive an email with a link to the online form. What should I do?

A: First ask your referee to check their spam folder. If they do not see the email, please email [yip@embo.org](mailto:yip@embo.org) and we will re-send the email containing the link.

- Q: My referee did not find an upload button for the letter, can I send the file to you by email?

A: There is no option to upload documents in the referee portal. Referees should copy and paste the letter into the field and click “form complete” to submit the form.

- Q: My referee made a mistake and accidentally submitted an empty form because they thought they would be able to attach a document. Can you re-open their online form?

A: Yes, we will reactivate their form and re-send them an email containing the link. Please let your referees know that they will have to copy-paste the letter in the online form field, not to attach a document, as there is no option of doing so. Please have them email [yip@embo.org](mailto:yip@embo.org) if they encounter any difficulties.

- Q: Can I submit my application prior to the submission of all three reference letters, as one of my referees has not submitted their letter yet?

A: Yes, you may submit your application without all the references being completed. Their submission is independent from your application, however all should arrive by the 1. April deadline.

- Q: How can we check that the reference letters have been sent?

A: Reference status is listed under the link to the application form on the EMBO application system.

## Full application form (2nd stage):

### Best three papers

- Q: What is meant by best three papers? Do I have to select among my first / last author papers or does any paper on which I am an author count?

A: In theory you can use any three papers as long as you justify why you chose them. However, it is generally advisable to first include first / last author papers, then any others you are proud of (first research papers and then reviews).

## Feedback

- Q: Can I get feedback from my application?

A: No feedback will be possible following the pre-selection stage due to the high number of applications each committee member has to review. However, the committee will provide feedback following a negative outcome at the interview stage. Please do not contact any committee members directly for feedback, any requests should be addressed to the YIP office only ([yip@embo.org](mailto:yip@embo.org)).