

## Programme document Leibniz Junior Research Groups

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### **1. Aims of the programme**

The Leibniz Association seeks to recruit extremely promising, talented junior researchers from Germany and the rest of the world, and therefore offers them attractive conditions such as early independence, competitive facilities and networking opportunities.

As part of the Leibniz Junior Research Groups funding format, younger researchers are to be given the opportunity to pursue their own research projects and establish themselves in their respective fields – including through additional research projects (acquired through the DFG, ERC, etc.). The recommended career step following on from the Junior Research Group should be an appointment to a professorship or a comparable, independent academic activity (e.g. within an academic institution, commercial company or research infrastructure).

## 2. Target of the funding

The funding goes towards the establishment of a Junior Research Group and the provision of essential resources. This includes personnel costs for the group leader<sup>1</sup>, two or three doctoral candidates and, in some cases, for postdoctoral group members, as well as for adequate equipment and facilities. Participation in the Leibniz Leadership Academy<sup>2</sup> is planned for the successful candidates.

**Level of funding:** Up to 1 million € is available from central Leibniz Association funds. In addition, the Leibniz Institute grants a co-financing amount of at least 40% of the total volume. Therefore, a project funding sum of approx. 1.7 million € can be aimed for.

**Duration of funding:** Five years

## 3. Eligibility criteria

In general, candidates should have obtained their doctorate no more than five years ago<sup>3</sup>. They should have a track record of outstanding academic work in their field. Candidates already working at Leibniz institutions can be nominated.

## 4. Applications

Applications must be directed to the Senate Competition Committee (SAW). The application text and all documents must be submitted in English. The chairperson of the SAW will decide on any potential exceptions. Leibniz Headquarters will provide an application template for every project proposal.

The proposed project must meet the following requirements: the application for the establishment of a Junior Research Group must encompass a five-year programme of work. The detailed project proposal must follow the structure of the template provided and must not exceed a total length of 12 pages (excluding the bibliography). The page limit for resubmitted applications is 12.5 pages as these applications may comment on changes made in the application in the addendum. Administrative information and the financial plan are submitted directly via the electronic application system. The structure of the application is as follows:

### A) The candidate's academic qualifications (weighting 40 %)

- The candidate's curriculum vitae and academic achievements, including mention of their top ten publications (narrative presentation in the application text, and tabular presentation as an appendix)
- An appraisal of their academic achievements in the form of two current letters of recommendation

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<sup>1</sup> It is recommended that at least one year of postdoctoral experience is available at the time of application. In the Leibniz Association's view, PIs in the Leibniz Junior Research Groups programme fulfil the requirements for classification within salary group 15 TVöD/TV-L. While the decision on classification is a matter for the research institution in each particular case, the minimum classification for LJRJ leaders is 14-5 TVöD/TV-L.

<sup>2</sup> [Leibniz Leadership Academy](#)

<sup>3</sup> Child-raising adjustment: add two years per child under the age of 12.

B) The candidate's proposed research project and its significance for the Leibniz Institute (weighting 40 %)

- Statements by the candidates regarding their proposed research project and their motivation to conduct research at the Leibniz Institute in question, including:
  - A summary of the planned project, including its research question and methods
  - An introduction to the academic field
  - A work programme with milestones and work packages
  - A rationale for the originality and innovative nature of the research project
  - An explanation of the research project's relevance in terms of its contribution to solving current academic and social, ecological or economic problems

C) Structural impact (weighting 10 %)

- A concept outlining the candidate's academic independence within the institute and how the project will be integrated into the institute's research landscape
- A description of the contribution to the internationalisation of the Leibniz Institute
- Explanation of research data management
- Brief presentation of a publication strategy for open access publications
- Presentation of outreach activities, where applicable
- Explanation of supporting measures in terms of adhering to the Leibniz equality standards<sup>4</sup> and the institute's equality concept when setting up the Junior Research Group
- Explanation of the consideration given to the Leibniz Guidelines on Career Development<sup>5</sup>
- Adherence to the Leibniz recruitment standards<sup>6</sup> in the selection procedure
- Integration in the academic system: planned national and international collaborations

D) Implementation and finances (weighting 10 %)

- Assurance of cofinancing from the Leibniz Institute, including its extent
- Presentation of the intended use of the funding in a finance plan which encompasses the direct and indirect project-related costs over the duration of the funding period, including an indication of the annual staff costs, material costs (including travel costs) and investments and a brief justification of their necessity
- Description of the quality assurance measures (e.g. adherence to the rules of good scientific practice)

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<sup>4</sup> [Leibniz Equality Standards](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Leibniz Guidelines on Career Development](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Standards for the appointments to academic management positions within the Leibniz Association](#)

***For additional general information, please see the applicant guidelines for the Leibniz Competition.***

## **5. Criteria for assessing applications**

***Academic excellence is the necessary criterion for funding.***

The assessments should be guided by the following criteria that underpin the SAW evaluation.

### A) Assessment of the suggested leader of the Leibniz Junior Research Group<sup>7</sup>:

- Academic performance, based on the number, quality and impact of publications, invited talks, and funding obtained from third parties
- The candidate's career status and future career prospects

### B) Assessment of the academic project:

- Academic and methodological quality by international standards
- The research project's chances of success: maturity of the project, specificity of the work programme and feasibility of the project
- Originality and level of innovation
- Relevance: contributions to solving current academic and social, ecological or economic problems

### C) Structural impact:

- A concept outlining the candidate's academic independence within the institute and how the project is integrated into the institute's research landscape
- Internationality: the funding of foreign candidates and candidates with international experience is explicitly encouraged
- Quality of research data management
- Adequateness of the open access publication strategy
- Quality of outreach activities, where applicable
- Contribution to implementing the Leibniz equality standards and realising the Leibniz diversity objective
- Consideration of the Leibniz Guidelines on Career Development
- Adherence to the Leibniz recruitment standards
- Integration in the academic system: planned national and international collaborations

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<sup>7</sup> When submitting the application, it is possible to indicate individual biographical circumstances to be taken into account during assessment. These include for example periods of childcare, care of dependents as well as (health) impairments and periods outside of academia.

D) Assessment of the planned implementation and financial planning:

- Assurance of cofinancing from the Leibniz Institute, including its extent
- Appropriateness of the cost and finance plan and of the quality assurance measures

## **6. Criteria for assessing interviews**

Promising candidates are invited to a virtual selection interview in front of a selection panel. The following aspects are assessed during the selection interviews:

- Technical questions about the planned research project from specialised members of the selection panel
- Presentation of the scientific and social relevance of the research project; the presentation should explicitly also convince members of the selection panel with a non-specialist perspective
- Reflection on the challenges of taking on the leadership of a research group

Taking these aspects into account, the selection panel recommends candidates to the SAW for funding or rejection.

## **7. Reporting and quality assurance**

At the beginning of the third calendar year of funding, the funded projects submit an interim report (of no more than five pages in length, excluding all appendices), which focuses particularly on the extent to which the milestones formulated in the application have been achieved. Leibniz Headquarters examine this interim report and may submit it to the SAW for information, which may make recommendations to the project. After the end of the funding phase, a final report will be submitted to the SAW. All researchers involved in the project commit to conduct their research in compliance with the rules of good scientific practice.<sup>8</sup>

## **8. Contact for questions and advice on applying**

Leibniz Association

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<sup>8</sup> [Guidelines for Good Scientific Practice in the Leibniz Association](#)